

# NJ Trails Plan Update



## A Vision and Action Plan for New Jersey's Future

March 2009

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
The New Jersey Department of Transportation





## State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

JON S. CORZINE  
*Governor*

MARK N. MAURIELLO  
*Acting Commissioner*

January 26, 2009

To New Jersey Residents and Visitors:

I am pleased to present to you the New Jersey Trails Plan. This plan revises and enhances the 1996 Trails Plan and presents a vision for trails to benefit all trail advocates, users, managers and planners. By creating a framework for current and future trails, this plan is a valuable tool outlining the necessary steps needed to realize that vision.

Trails provide a welcome respite from the rigors of daily life. They enhance our environment, economy and quality of life while offering health and fitness opportunities, outdoor classrooms for nature study, greenways for wildlife conservation, alternative transportation corridors and links with our historic past.

I would like to thank the New Jersey Trails Council and the Trails Plan Advisory Committee for their guidance and diligence in formulating ideas and recommendations for the New Jersey Trails Plan. I also appreciate the input of trail managers, organizations and the trail-using public who provided many comments and suggestions. Finally, I am grateful to the Department of Transportation for being our partner and funding this endeavor, making it possible to prepare this Plan.

As Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection, I endorse the 2008 New Jersey Trails Plan Update to serve as a blueprint for present and future actions to improve trails throughout New Jersey.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mark N. Mauriello".

Mark N. Mauriello  
Acting Commissioner



## State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

P.O. Box 600

Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0600

JON S. CORZINE  
*Governor*

STEPHEN DILTS  
*Commissioner*

March 13, 2009

To New Jersey Citizens and Visitors:

It is my privilege and pleasure to endorse the New Jersey Trails Plan. This Plan has been a cooperative partnership by the New Jersey Department of Transportation and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. This cooperation is based on recognition that many of the goals of this Plan are consistent with desired outcomes from the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update. In serving a transportation function, trails support *more ways to travel* by providing opportunities for improved fitness and a sense of well-being; they support *healthy streets and communities* and trails can contribute to the *economic vitality* of local communities directly by improving quality of place.

In this time of increased understanding and an increasing sense of urgency about our reliance on fossil fuels and global climate change, the vision, goals and recommendations in this Plan provide us direct and positive ways to take action to mitigate these problems and to reduce our carbon footprint.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation supports the findings and recommendations of the Plan and will continue its support to develop trails as a key strategy in accommodating pedestrian and bicycle travel throughout New Jersey's transportation network.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line.

Stephen Dilts  
Commissioner

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## NEW JERSEY TRAILS COUNCIL

P.O. Box 404, Trenton, NJ 08625 Tel. 609-984-1339, Fax. 609-984-1427

Citizens of New Jersey:

In January 1996, the New Jersey Trails Council brought forward a Trails Plan for New Jersey that set the stage for a new era in trails development. Trails interest was shifting from single-use to multi-use trails. Water trails were on the verge of an explosion in use with the development of affordable lightweight kayaks and canoes. Equestrian trail-riding was expanding in both rider numbers and horse-friendly locations for riding across the state. Mountain and hybrid bicycles were taking bicycle touring off-road into our fields and forests. Off Highway Vehicle users were beginning to seek access to privately and publicly owned lands of the state to enjoy their trail pursuits.

Looming large in this new era was the impact of the federal Recreational Trails Program. Since 1993, grants of more than \$8.5 million have been appropriated for grassroots trail development across the parklands and greenways of New Jersey. Not only have these funds leveraged greater investment for trails in state parks and in rural areas, the program has also encouraged miles of new trails in the state's urban centers and developing suburbs. Often using the routes of the state's abandoned railways, utility rights of way, and heritage transportation corridors, these urban trails systems extend out from our cities to reach across the New Jersey landscape.

Now twelve years after the last Trails Plan was released, the New Jersey Trails Council is pleased to submit this New Jersey Trails Plan Update as a comprehensive analysis of the role of trails and trail uses in the lives of New Jersey residents. This update reflects the combined efforts of the volunteers of the New Jersey Trails Council, a 23-member Trails Plan Advisory Committee, staff from NJDEP and NJDOT and hundreds of federal, state, and regional trails managers, advocates, interested citizens and trail users who contributed to the assessment. This Trails Plan Update identifies the benefits and challenges of providing a thoughtfully planned and environmentally beneficial trails system for a wide range of users. It invites and embraces the participation of government, the non-profit sector, and citizens to meet a new vision for trails in New Jersey.

While much has changed since 1996, this Trails Plan Update echoes the sentiments of nearly every participant in the assessment: trails today have an even more critically important role to play in the lives of New Jerseyans, physically linking communities, providing transportation networks, providing close-to-home infrastructure for family recreation, fitness and wellness activities, and protecting critical natural and historic landscapes, habitats, and open spaces. We hope that the vision presented in this Plan will inspire trail users and decision makers alike to implement the recommendations, keeping New Jersey's place as a state committed to trails innovation, environmental protection, volunteerism, and access for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'William D. Foelsch', is written over a horizontal line.

William D. Foelsch, Chair  
New Jersey Trails Council

Photo: NJDEP





## Acknowledgements

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) express their gratitude to the following members of the Trails Plan Advisory Committee for their extensive time and efforts contributing to this Plan. Special recognition is also given to the New Jersey Trails Council, which represents trails interests statewide as advisors to NJDEP and NJDOT. The efforts of the Trails Council led to this Trails Plan update, and many members also served on the Trails Plan Advisory Committee.

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Wally Tunison, *Jersey Off-Road Bicycle Association*  
Larry Miller (staff), *NJDEP, Division of Parks and Forestry*

This Plan was funded by The Federal Highway Administration under the NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Local Technical Assistance Program.



Consultant Team:  
The RBA Group in association with  
Community Trail Connection

## Table of Contents

### **Chapter 1: Purpose and Scope of the Trails Plan Update. . . . . 1**

New Jersey Trails Plan Purpose. . . . .	1
Scope of the Trails Plan Update . . . . .	2
Public Outreach . . . . .	3
Trail User Survey . . . . .	4
What are Trails? . . . . .	6
Benefits of Trails. . . . .	7
Types of Trails and Trail Users . . . . .	8

### **Chapter 2: Status of Trails Planning in New Jersey. . . . . 15**

The New Jersey State Trails Program . . . . .	16
The Recreational Trails Program . . . . .	16
The New Jersey Trails System. . . . .	20
Current Planning Initiatives . . . . .	22

### **Chapter 3: The Trails Plan Context . . . . . 25**

Trails and Transportation . . . . .	25
Trails and Economic Development . . . . .	26
Trails and Greenways . . . . .	27
Garden State Greenways. . . . .	28
Trails and Open Space Preservation . . . . .	29
Trails and Health . . . . .	29
Changing Demographics – Growth and Migration . . . . .	30
Changing Demographics – Age Structure of Population . . . . .	31
Changing Land Use – Sprawl. . . . .	31
Changes in Trail User Types . . . . .	32

<b>Chapter 4: Key Issues and Findings . . . . .</b>	<b>33</b>
Funding . . . . .	33
Maintenance and Operation of Trails . . . . .	36
Facility Needs . . . . .	36
Sharing Trails . . . . .	36
Motorized Trail Uses . . . . .	37
Urban Trails . . . . .	38
Trail Access for People with Sensory and Mobility Impairments . . . . .	39
Planning Guidelines, Standards, Coordination. . . . .	39
Rights of Way for Trails . . . . .	40
Information Needs/Promotion of Trails . . . . .	41
 <b>Chapter 5: A Vision for New Jersey's Trails . . . . .</b>	 <b>43</b>
Introduction . . . . .	43
Trails Vision . . . . .	43
Vision Theme Summary . . . . .	44
Vision Theme 1 - Trails For All . . . . .	46
Vision Theme 2 - Trails For Community Connection . . . . .	49
Vision Theme 3 - Trail Maintenance and Operations. . . . .	51
Vision Theme 4 - Funding For Trails . . . . .	53
Vision Theme 5 - Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience . . . . .	56
Vision Theme 6 - Trail Information, Communication and Promotion. . . . .	58
Vision Theme 7 - Trails Planning and Development . . . . .	62
Summary of Recommendations . . . . .	65
 <b>Chapter 6: Implementing the Plan. . . . .</b>	 <b>69</b>
Roles and Responsibilities . . . . .	69
Strategic Priorities . . . . .	72
 <b>Appendices . . . . .</b>	 <b>75</b>
Summary of Public Comments . . . . .	75
Key Resources . . . . .	77
State Agency Mission Statements . . . . .	80
The Trails Council and The State Trails System . . . . .	82
(Legislation, Administrative Orders and Rules)	





*Patriot's Path, Morris County*

# NJ Trails Plan

## 1. Purpose & Scope of the Trails Plan Update

### New Jersey Trails Plan Purpose

This update of the New Jersey Trails Plan presents a renewed vision, goals and strategic actions to help guide and coordinate the efforts of all those who plan, build, operate and maintain New Jersey's trails. The Plan reaffirms the importance of providing trails for all and emphasizes the value of trails in supporting a wide range of benefits. The Trails Plan is ultimately intended to benefit New Jersey citizens and visitors of all ages and abilities, for whom trails can provide access to nature and to community destinations, serving both recreation and transportation needs. The Trails Plan is intended to inspire those who care about trails and see their value to New Jersey.

The Plan is also intended as a guide to those who must make decisions regarding the funding and development of trails, from the state to the local level. To realize New Jersey's Trail Vision as an on-the-ground reality will require the commitment of all levels of government to adequately fund trails development, operation and maintenance, and the commitment of all trail advocates and providers to cooperate and work collaboratively to expand and improve trails. The New Jersey Trails Plan serves as a common ground for all to achieve these two conditions for success – funding and cooperation.



In addition to legislators and elected officials, there are two state Departments primarily responsible for funding, policy and program decisions affecting trails, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). The primary agency involved in the development of trails is NJDEP. The Agency's Division of Parks and Forestry includes the Office of Natural Lands Management (ONLM), which is responsible for the Trails Program. The Trails Program receives guidance from the New Jersey Trails Council, a volunteer committee representing a wide range of trails constituencies. New Jersey's state parks and forests include numerous trails and provide opportunities for additional trails. Lands managed by the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife division offer numerous marked and unmarked trails available during non-hunting times or by special permit for equestrian use on selected wildlife management areas.

Other units within NJDEP also administer programs that significantly impact trails. The Division of Land Use Regulation administers rules pertaining to freshwater wetlands, stream encroachment, flood plains, coastal areas and riparian lands. The administration of these rules and regulations can have a significant effect on trails development. The Green Acres Program administers the Garden State Preservation Trust, the major source of funding for the acquisition of open space, for farmland and historic preservation, and for parks and recreational facilities.

The other Department with major trails involvement is the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). The Bicycle and Pedestrian Unit provided funding through the Federal Highway Administration to update the Trails Plan. There are other divisions within these two agencies that also contribute powerfully to New Jersey's trails, and other agencies with programs that impact trails development. In addition, most counties and many municipalities have also embraced trails, developing and managing trails as part of their parks, recreation and open space programs.

Non-profit and volunteer organizations also make a significant contribution to trails. They vary widely, from land trusts, conservation and recreation organizations staffed by trained professionals to trails advocacy groups and outdoor recreation clubs staffed by volunteers. These grassroots organizations build a broad constituency of trail advocates and users, and also provide important services, from managing preserves to organizing volunteer labor. Much of the information about trails, maps and descriptions comes from their efforts. Many trails are in place and maintained primarily because of the enthusiasm and persistence of local volunteers and "friends" groups. Often in partnership with government, trails organizations guide many trail projects through the land acquisition and development process to trail opening celebrations. This Plan is also for these non-profit organizations, which collectively act as a strong and positive force for New Jersey Trails.

## Scope of the Trails Plan Update

This Trails Plan differs from earlier New Jersey Trails Plans, published in 1982 and 1996. Unlike the 1996 Plan, it does not evaluate trails in terms of their eligibility for inclusion in the New Jersey Trails System. It does not include an inventory of existing trails nor does it focus on individual trails. It is similar to the first New Jersey Trails Plan published in 1982 in that it is comprehensive in scope and assesses a broad range of needs, desires, topics and issues from the standpoint of both trail users and trail providers.

The planning approach included an examination of trails planning and trends that influence trails development and use in New Jersey. An active Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) representing trail user



groups and public and private trails organizations provided guidance. The planning process included interviews with key stakeholders and extensive public outreach, with focus groups, public information centers, vision workshops, county surveys, state park superintendent surveys, trail user surveys and on-site (trail head) intercept surveys.

Based on the needs, desires, topics and issues that were raised during the planning process, this Plan establishes a Vision for trails in New Jersey, proposes Goals for fulfilling the Vision, recommends actions and activities to achieve the Goals, and assigns roles and responsibilities for implementing those actions. The Plan proposes many possible actions, including a series of priority short-term (1-2 years), mid-range (3-5 years) and long-term actions (6-10 years), many of which are intended to be on-going. The actual priority and order will ultimately depend on available funding and the commitment of the trails community - both government and non-profit - to advance and implement these recommendations.

## Public Outreach

The extensive outreach carried out for this Plan guided the development of:

- Key issues and current topics to be considered in the Plan
- A Vision for trails in New Jersey
- Goals describing the conditions necessary to achieve the Vision
- Recommendations for actions to achieve the Goals

The outreach activities included:

### Surveys to gather input from stakeholders

- County Park Director Surveys
- State Park Service Superintendent Surveys
- Intercept Surveys (conducted at four trail facilities throughout the state)
- Trail User Surveys
- Website Surveys



*Survey, Pine Barrens Canoe Livery,  
Chatsworth*



*Survey, Delaware and Raritan Canal  
Multi-Use Trail*

### Focus Groups to explore specific topics and issues

- State Agency Trails Issues Focus Group on June 21, 2006
- Health and Trails Focus Group on August 30, 2006
- Business and Landowner Focus Group on September 8, 2006
- Urban Trails Focus Group on September 12, 2006

### Open Houses to confirm issues and opportunities

- September 12, 2006 Atlantic County
- September 19, 2006 Morris County
- September 26, 2006 Mercer County

### Visioning Workshops to develop a future vision and vision themes

- October 16, 2006 Morris County
- October 24, 2006 Burlington County
- October 26, 2006 Monmouth County



*Open House, Trenton City Museum*

## Trail User Survey

**63%**

of respondents felt that their use of trails has influenced the purchase of their homes

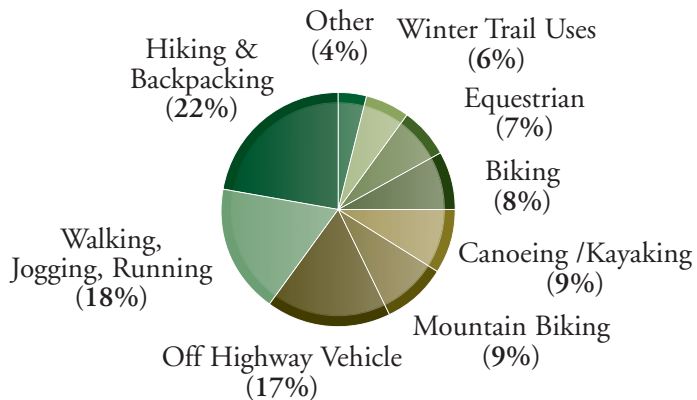
An essential part of the outreach effort is the Trail User Survey. The purpose of the survey is to gauge current public opinion regarding trails in New Jersey, identifying topics, issues and concerns to inform the process of updating the New Jersey Trails Plan. The survey was conducted informally and the results cannot claim to be statistically representative. Participants were self-selecting. Nonetheless, the survey provided an important opportunity to hear from thousands of New Jersey residents who care about trails. The results provide significant insight into the perspectives and priorities of many of New Jersey's trail users and supporters.

Surveys were filled out by attendees at three Open House Meetings held in September 2006. The survey was also posted on the project web site and the public at large was invited to fill it out.

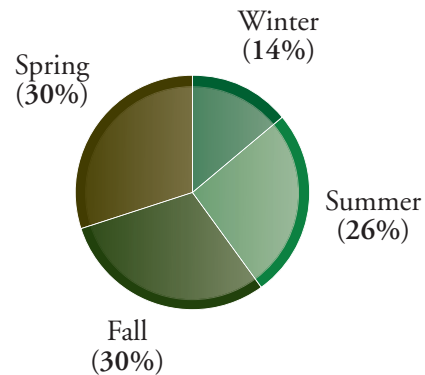
Response to the survey was overwhelming. A total of 3,759 respondents completed the survey.

\*Some of the results from the Trail User Survey are included here.

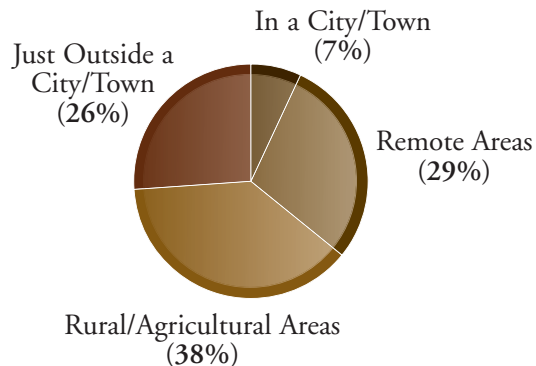
### Top Trail Activities



### In what season do you always/most often use trails?



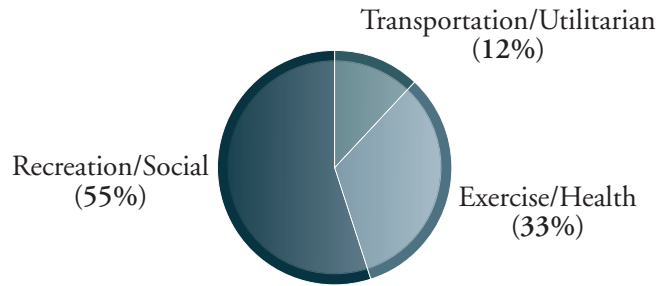
### What setting best describes the trail location for your most frequent trail activity?



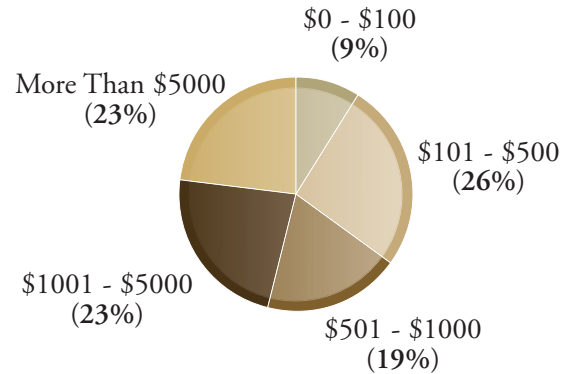
### Top 10 Trail/Water Routes respondents use most often in New Jersey

1. D&R Canal State Park Multi-use Path
2. Wharton State Forest
3. NJ ORV Park – Chatsworth (closed Sept. 2008)
4. Delaware Water Gap NRA
5. Brendan T. Byrne State Forest (formerly Lebanon SF)
6. Ringwood State Park
7. Appalachian Trail
8. Assunpink WMA
9. Waywayanda State Park
10. Paulinskill Valley Trail

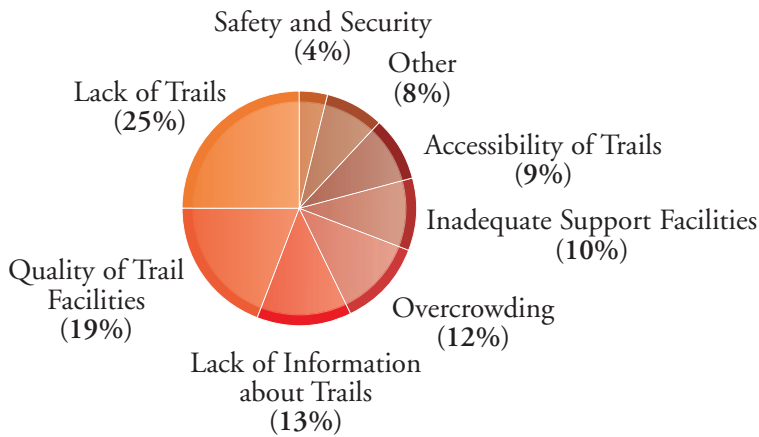
**Overall what is the primary reason you use trails?**



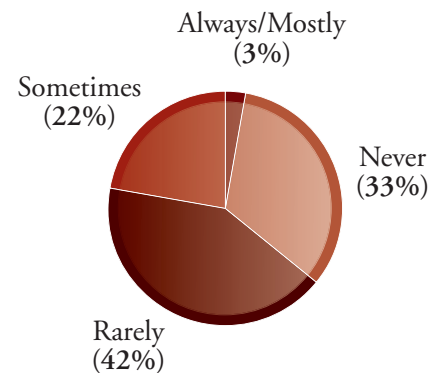
**Approximately how much money did you spend on trail equipment in the past year?**



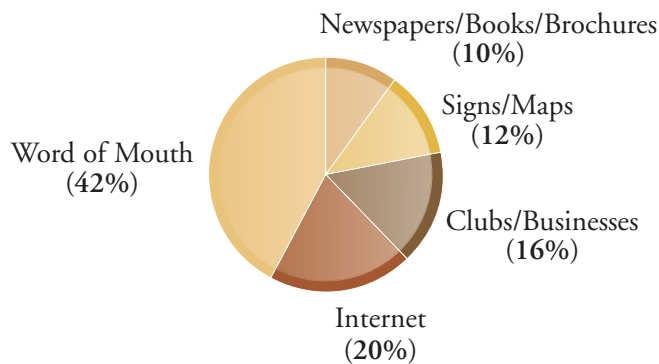
**Top Trail Issues**



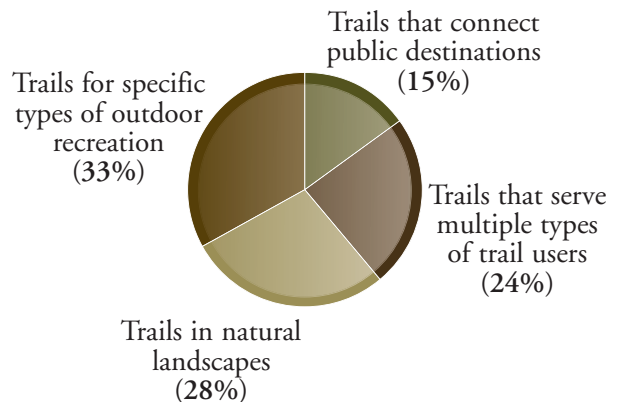
**How often do you experience conflicts with other trail users?**



**How do you typically learn about trails to visit?**



**If New Jersey is to develop new trails what should be emphasized?**





## What are Trails?

As described in the first New Jersey Trails Plan, trails preceded humankind's existence on the earth as traces or paths of least resistance, accommodating movements of land animals. With the arrival of homo-sapiens on the planet and for most of our existence, both land and water trails have been considered and used as transportation facilities. With the emergence of an industrialized, urbanized economy, the evolution of transportation and the development of mechanized travel to meet our commercial and personal transport needs, some trails were transformed and new facilities were developed into roadways, railways and highways to accommodate the new modes. As this happened, many trails that were once the primary links in our transport system became byways; eventually they began to serve primarily a recreation, as opposed to a utilitarian, function.

If you asked someone 50 years ago to define trails, they would likely have suggested that trails were paths located in parks or forests used for recreation primarily by hikers. This definition has broadened markedly. Today, trails are defined much more broadly with respect to uses, settings, users and their place in our culture.

Trails continue to be popular for outdoor recreation, but many are also important for transportation (as they originally were). Some trails are created to commemorate, preserve and provide access to historic places or unique natural landscapes, providing a venue for education and interpretation. Many trails are located in rural or bucolic settings, but an increasing number are found in urban and suburban areas where they are sometimes referred to as "community pathways." Today, trails can also be located within public rights of way and can include "on-road" elements, such as a bicycle touring route or a trail connector that completes a network of trails. Trails are being used by an expanding variety of user types. In addition to land trails, there are a fast growing number of water trails or "blueways": streams, rivers, canals and waterfronts for boating.

Trails are enjoyed not only by the vigorous and physically fit, but by persons of all abilities, ages and means who are seeking physical activity and improved fitness as part of a healthy active lifestyle. They are for the old and the young, including people with varying sensory or motor limitations. In short, they are for everyone. *Outdoor Recreation in America*, a 2003 survey conducted for the Recreation Roundtable by Roper Starch Worldwide, confirms a high national participation in a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities that make use of trails, for example:

### Outdoor Recreation in American, 2003 National Survey

Walking .....	46%
Bicycling .....	22%
Hiking .....	18%
Canoeing/ Kayaking .....	8%
Horseback Riding .....	6%
Off-Road Vehicle Driving .....	6%
Mountain Biking .....	5%

Finally, trails are not facilities set apart. They are part of our infrastructure, the connecting fabric of our communities. This broader definition of trails calls for a plan that addresses a broader audience and elevates the importance of trails to our society now and into the future.

## Benefits of Trails

The benefits of trails seem almost endless. Many benefits were defined and discussed in the previous State Trails Plans, however, only more recently have they been widely recognized. Collectively these benefits present compelling reasons for addressing the needs of trails in New Jersey.

### Recreational Benefits

Trails provide a wide variety of opportunities for recreation and leisure time pursuits that virtually anyone can enjoy, including activities that require no equipment or special facilities. Trails use can be a life-long pursuit. Trails provide access to various environments and, thereby, to opportunities for other recreational activities such as bird watching, photography, fishing, hunting, etc.

### Transportation Benefits

Trails serve as facilities for purposeful travel such as commuting and shopping. (See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Trails and Transportation.)

### Environmental Benefits

Trails can act as buffers or green spaces that preserve and protect the environment, contributing to wildlife habitat, to water and air quality and to flood control, for example. Trails foster awareness and appreciation of the natural environment, contributing to the support of programs for conservation, preservation and open space protection. Trails used for transportation result in fewer vehicles on the road, minimizing the environmental impacts of vehicle use.

### Health Benefits

Trails use contributes to healthy, active lifestyles, providing physical, mental and emotional benefits to all, regardless of age or ability. Trails provide opportunities for physical challenges and fitness. (See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Trails and Health.)

### Economic Benefits

Trails offer direct economic benefit to users where they provide low-cost, close-to-home means of transportation and opportunities for recreation. According to the Outdoor Industry Foundation, 2006, active outdoor recreation generates 730 billion dollars to the national economy. Trails are proven to increase property values and can be a part of urban revitalization or redevelopment. They contribute to the local economy and can be tourism destinations. Trails can even be part of ecotourism strategies, engaging visitors in first hand experience of natural and historic landscapes.

Photo: NJ Committee of The East Coast Greenway



*Rahway River Park, Cranford*

## Social/Cultural Benefits

Trails can provide either an individual experience (serenity, solitude) or a social or group experience. They provide connections among people and communities, including opportunities to encounter and interact with other users of differing socio-cultural backgrounds. Trails development can provide opportunities for diverse groups to work toward a common goal. A trail can provide access to cultural, historic and scenic resources and can also serve as an aesthetic feature/attraction in and of itself. Since trails can be used by people of all ages, trails are family-friendly.

## Educational Benefits

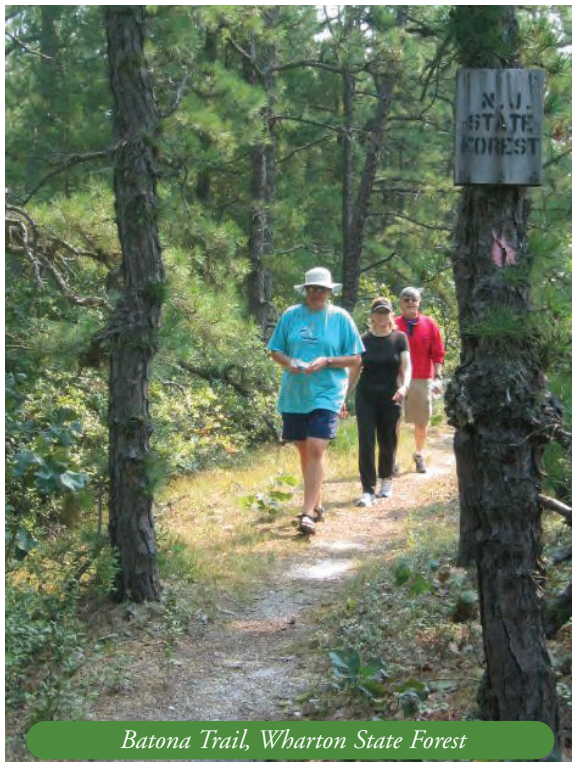
Trails provide opportunities to explore natural settings and to learn about nature and the environment within communities. Trails also provide venues to observe and learn about historic and cultural landscape features, promoting an understanding of the history and geography of the places through which they pass.

## Types of Trails and Trail Users

Practically all types of trails and trail uses are covered in this Plan. The following narratives describe major trail types and uses, though in reality, the lines between them blur and new forms of trail activities, conveyances and designs are constantly emerging.

### Major Trail Types

- Hiking/Foot Trails
- Bicycling Trails/Bike Paths
- Mountain Biking/Mountain Biking Trails
- Equestrians/Equestrian Trails
- Canoeing/Kayaking/Water Trails
- Winter Trail Users/Snow Trails (non-motorized)
- Off-Highway Vehicle Users/Off-Highway Vehicle Trails



### Hiking/Foot Trails

The term “hiking” is used both as a generic term to denote many forms of foot travel on trails, and as a term describing a specific type of trail use. These various forms include such uses as trail walking, nature walking, jogging or running, hiking and backpacking, which differ from one another in a variety of ways, from their purpose to the types of trails and environments they typically require.

In New Jersey, foot trail use can be undertaken throughout the year with no equipment, at no cost, alone or with others, and by practically anybody. Trails of varying width, surface, terrain and distance serve the needs of these different forms of foot trail use. The descriptions of the various forms of foot trail activity that follow, those most frequently practiced in New Jersey, are derived from the New Jersey Trails Plan of 1982.

Trail walking (for pleasure, fitness or socializing) can take place on trails of varying length, width, and surface and on many different types of terrain in urban, suburban and rural environments. The benefits of trail walking come from engaging in the activity itself, though the character or qualities of the trail facility can certainly add to the enjoyment of the experience.

Nature walking is distinct in terms of purpose, i.e., the observation or study of some facet of nature either on the trail or at a destination accessed by the trail. Nature walking can also take place on various types of trails within a variety of settings; however, some trails are specifically designed for this activity. These trails may include interpretive information (usually on signs) about local flora or fauna or other local features.

Jogging or running is undertaken primarily for reasons of health and fitness, but can also serve a social function. These are strenuous activities, and trails used for this purpose are typically longer, with smooth surfaces free from obstacles, though not necessarily paved. These trails are, desirably, located on gentle as opposed to rugged terrain. Shared use loop trails in parks or linear trails along rail rights of way are ideal for this purpose. Another challenging variation, referred to as trail running, takes place on more rugged trails.

Hiking may be described as a prolonged walking activity usually on less improved or unimproved foot trails which may be located on varied or rugged terrain, often in more remote areas. As such, hiking can present physical or technical challenges. Hiking is usually engaged in for longer periods of time than trail walking, from several hours to a full day, and hikers typically carry food, water and other gear to last the duration of the hike. Hikers are motivated by many reasons: the physical challenges, exercise and fitness, or to experience a sense of remoteness or solitude in a natural or scenic environment. Trails or trail systems used for hiking are, desirably, of sufficient length to accommodate trips of longer duration. Since hikers typically travel at 1 to 3 miles per hour, hiking trails should be a minimum of three miles long and up to 15 or more miles if they are to accommodate day-long hiking trips. Trails or trail systems in parks that provide this distance and have loops or circuits are ideal. Hiking requires relatively simple trailhead facilities and parking or access to transit, since trails most frequently used for hiking may be at some distance from the hiker's residence.

Backpacking can be simply described as hiking for more than a day. As such, backpackers must carry food, water, shelter and other gear with them. Even with modern lightweight equipment, carrying a loaded backpack is a strenuous activity. In addition to the challenge of carrying a heavy pack, often over unimproved trails, backpacking involves camping overnight in remote areas. Given these circumstances, backpacking appeals to those who enjoy challenge and adventure. Backpacking trails should have places for camping en route, with sources of water, and some form of sanitary facilities. There are a limited number of trails in New Jersey that accommodate backpacking.

Collectively, as suggested by the trail user surveys conducted for this Plan, the various forms of foot trail use are the most popular trail activities in New Jersey. Foot trails are available in most state parks, forests and recreation areas in New Jersey, and at many county and municipal parks as well.

### **Bicycling Trails/Bike Paths**

Bicycling (as a trails activity) consists of the use of the bicycle for recreational or utilitarian purposes





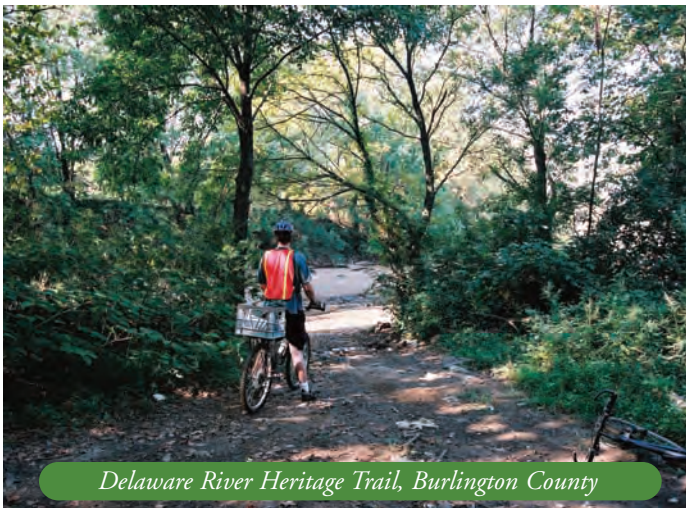
*Rahway River Park, Cranford*

on a variety of facilities. Typically these facilities are multi-use or shared-use paths of varying widths, with an asphalt surface or with a compacted non-impervious surface such as quarry screenings or crushed stone. The types of trails used for bicycling are typically suitable for walking (or in some cases equestrian use) and, where they have a hard surface, are suitable for skate boarding, in-line skating and other wheeled conveyances. This being the case, trails bicyclists are typically sharing facilities with other trail user

groups. Where trail traffic volumes are moderate to low, bicycle use is generally compatible with foot trail uses.

Bicycle trails may be loop trails located in parks as part of a multi-use trail system, or linear trails located within abandoned rail rights of way, or utility and roadway rights of way. In this Plan, as in the 1982 Trails Plan, bicycle trails may also consist of designated (signed or mapped) recreational bicycle touring routes that are completely or partially on roadways, e.g. Delaware River Heritage Trail and the High Point to Cape May Bicycle Touring Route.

Bicycle trail riders include a wide range of participants, from families with children out for a recreational ride for usually short distances and enthusiasts who may ride long distances, even multi-day trips if trails of sufficient length are available, to those using a trail for commuting or other utilitarian trips.



*Delaware River Heritage Trail, Burlington County*

There are nationally accepted design guidelines for multi-use paths (The AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 1999) and the New Jersey DOT has developed its own design guidelines for bicycle facilities. Currently, these guidelines are incompatible with NJDEP regulatory requirements, which allow (under a general permit) a maximum path width of only 6'-0 in wetlands or wetlands transition areas. This width is not sufficient for shared use according to existing "state of the practice" guidelines.

### Mountain Biking/Mountain Biking Trails

Mountain biking is a trail activity recognized in the 1996 Trails Plan as a distinct trail activity. Mountain biking involves riding a mountain bike or fat-tired bike on a variety of trail surfaces or rights

of way. Mountain biking differs from other bicycle trail riding in terms of the intensity of the activity and the types of facilities on which it is practiced. Although mountain biking can be carried out in a variety of settings: back yards, dirt or gravel roads, park trails and other multi-use trails, mountain bikers typically prefer to ride on trails referred to as singletrack – narrow trails that wind through forests, fields, hills and mountains. Mountain biking is challenging and tests a rider's skills and stamina. Mountain bikers describe a sense of enjoyment and excitement that results from riding singletrack.

Because riders often ride far from developed areas, there is an ethic of self-reliance in the sport. Riders must be able to repair their broken bikes to avoid being stranded where help may not be available. Club rides and other forms of group rides are common, however, individual solitude is often sought for the rider's experience.

Photo: NJ Trail Ride Association;  
Fireworks Photography



### Equestrians/Equestrian Trails

Equestrians or horseback riders ride on a wide range of facilities, therefore, equestrian trails encompass a variety of designated trails, paths and greenways, woods roads, abandoned rail rights of way, utility corridors and undeveloped lands, both public and private, that are open to recreational horseback riding. This includes sand roads and fire breaks in the Pine Barrens which are heavily used by equestrians. Trails for equestrian use are available in many state and county parks and federal recreation areas.

In addition, the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife has 16 designated wildlife management areas (WMA) that are open to equestrian use with a Bridle Trail Permit.

### NJ WMA For Equestrian Use

- Flatbrook-Roy
- Colliers Mills
- Peaslee
- Whittingham
- Greenwood
- Higbee Beach
- Black River
- Medford
- Tuckahoe
- Capoolong Creek
- Glassboro
- Winslow
- Alexauken Creek
- Millville
- Assunpink
- Union Lake

Equestrian organizations, perhaps more so than other trail user groups, have created systems of equestrian trails on private land through agreements with the landowners. Horseback riding can take place on multi-use trails, where permitted.

Since horses are prey animals, their natural instinct is to run when frightened. Therefore horses may be startled when they encounter unfamiliar users, such as bicyclists, hikers, ATVs and dog-walkers. Horseback riding can cause physical impacts to the trail surface and horse droppings affect the use of trails by others.



Horseback riding typically requires more extensive trail head facilities than other trail uses, and may include trailer parking, water troughs and mounting stations.



*Wading River, Wharton State Forest*

### Canoeing/Kayaking/Water Trails

Canoeing and kayaking involve the use of non-motorized, paddle-powered vessels on navigable waterways. A water trail (blue trail, blueway) can be described as a stretch of river, a canal, a shoreline, or other waterway navigable by canoe or kayak that provides an educational, scenic, or physically challenging recreational experience.

Most canoeing and kayaking occurs in freshwater settings; however, in New Jersey, canoeing or, more often kayaking, is practiced in bays or along the shore. There has been unprecedented growth in the use of kayaks and canoes for bay, lake and river fishing. As is the case with trail walking or hiking, canoeing and kayaking are often performed as an outdoor family recreation activity. They are also used as means of viewing or photographing scenery. Canoeing and kayaking have the potential to be part of Eco-tourism and Heritage Tourism strategies.

Access to water trails is available at many state, county and municipal parks, forests and recreation areas in New Jersey.



*Paulinskill Valley Trail*

Photo: NJDEP

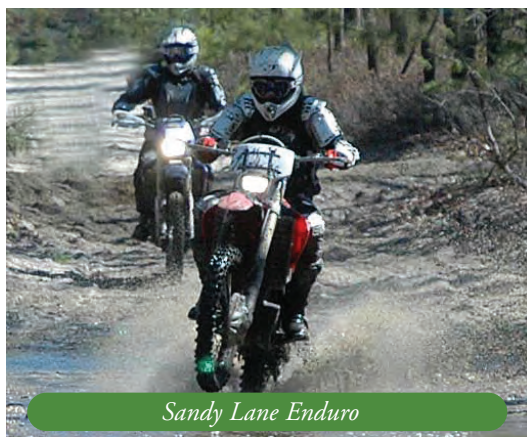
### Winter Trail Users/Snow Trails (non-motorized)

Non-motorized winter trail uses in New Jersey include cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, dog sledging (one or more sled dogs pulling a manned sled over ice and through snow) and snow biking (cycling, usually with a mountain bike, on snow and/or ice). Other less frequently practiced types of non-motorized winter sports include skibobbing (using a bicycle-type frame attached to skis instead of wheels) and skijoring (cross-country skiers pulled by

dogs). Winter trail uses are generally physically demanding, requiring endurance and skill. Cross Country Skiing is considered among the best cardiovascular fitness activities and provides muscle toning for every major muscle group.

Snow trails are linear facilities that accommodate winter sports users. Winter sport users often utilize hiking, biking or multi-use trails when they are snow covered. Loop trails with internal connectors and cutoffs are preferred by cross-country skiers. These allow different trail lengths and permit easy return access for tired skiers. Multiple short loops with a single access point are often preferable to one long loop.

Non-motorized winter sports trails are available at most state parks, forests and recreation areas in New Jersey and in many county and municipal parks.



## Off-Highway Vehicle Users/Off-Highway Vehicle Trails

Off-Highway Vehicle trail use involves the use of motorized vehicles on “off-road” trails or routes, providing the user with a visceral sense of exhilaration, challenge and adventure. OHV use has been rapidly growing in popularity. For example, over 15 million Americans ride ATVs and 70% ride as a family recreation activity. This activity usually involves a significant investment of equipment, fuel and maintenance.

“Off-Highway Vehicle” (OHV) is the currently preferred generic term for off-road vehicles or motorized trail vehicles, which includes a wide range of vehicle types. OHV refers to vehicles licensed and registered for on-road use, such as four-wheel drive vehicles (pick up trucks and sport utility vehicles) and dual sport motorcycles (street legal), as well as to those that lack criteria needed for operation on public roads, such as All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), off-highway motorcycles (dirt bikes) and snowmobiles.<sup>1</sup>

OHVs can be used on private lands with landowner permission. Where OHV users may legally ride on the state’s public lands, however, is regulated by the Motor Vehicle Laws of New Jersey, Title 39 (for use on public roads) and the State Park Service Code (for use within State Parks and Forests)<sup>2</sup>. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Off-Road Vehicle Use Policy Directive also regulates and restricts the use of OHVs on all NJDEP-administered lands.

There is considerable unmet demand for OHV utilization and access opportunities. This has likely contributed to illegal use on public land and trails (not intended or designed for that purpose) and trespassing on private property. There is a history of debate over the use of OHVs on public lands. OHV enthusiasts and NJDEP have been in search of land (public and private) for operating OHVs. NJDEP continues to look for legal opportunities to establish designated venues.

<sup>1</sup> Both ATVs and snowmobiles must be registered with New Jersey’s Motor Vehicle Commission for use on public lands and for crossing public highways. There is currently no registration for dirt bikes.

<sup>2</sup> According to the State Park Service Code (N.J.A.C. 7:2-17 et seq.), which was readopted April 13, 2007, a person may operate licensed and registered motor vehicles (such as four-wheel drive vehicles and dual sport motorcycles) on established public roads on lands under the jurisdiction of the State Park Service. This includes dirt, gravel or sand roads in state parks and forests that are designated as public roads unless the road is posted as closed by signs or barriers. The State Park Service Code does not allow ATV or dirt bike use on NJDEP lands except with a special use permit for organized “special events” on a pre-established course under prescribed conditions. Snowmobiles are allowed on designated roads and trails in designated state parks and forests.



*Delaware & Raritan Canal Bridge over Route 1, Lawrence Township, NJ*

# NJ Trails Plan

## 2. Status of Trails Planning in New Jersey

Under ideal circumstances trails planning in New Jersey would be comprehensive, cooperative and coordinated, with sufficient staff and funding resources at all levels to carry out trails programs. The status of trails planning in New Jersey could be improved. Governmental priorities tend to lag behind public desires and, as a result, there has been a lack of resources devoted to trails planning in New Jersey.

At the state level within the State Park System, which is the primary source of state managed trails, park superintendents generally do not have facilities plans or management plans to guide their trails planning efforts, and they lack the funding and staff to develop them. As a result, critical operations and maintenance efforts come first and planning for trails is deferred.

At the county level, several counties have exemplary and active trails planning and development programs and they coordinate their trails planning efforts with other counties, municipalities and the state. Slightly more than half the counties have prepared or are developing formal trails plans or other planning documents that address trails planning. Unfortunately, this means that about half of the counties in the state have not prepared plans to guide their efforts to implement and manage trails.

While there are many examples of successful urban trails, most municipalities have placed little or no emphasis on planning for trails and few routinely consider trails either as a part of their planning activities or as part of their transportation infrastructure. Addressing trails in municipal master plans is a start, but further efforts to implement plans and put trails on the ground are needed. For those municipalities that have made efforts at developing trails, the result is often fragmented trails with inadequate coordination and communication. At all levels of government, despite the previously discussed link between trails and transportation, there is a disconnect between those who plan trails and those who develop transportation projects, especially bridge projects. Consequently, opportunities for appropriate trails connections are often missed.

*If we keep doing  
what we're doing,  
we're going to  
keep getting what  
we're getting.*

– STEPHEN R. COVEY  
US leadership and  
success consultant



## The New Jersey State Trails Program

Managing New Jersey's State Trails Program is the responsibility of the Office of Natural Lands Management (ONLM) in NJDEP's Division of Parks and Forestry. The Trails Program is just one of several programs managed by that office, which is currently staffed by one full-time employee. Because of its limited staff resources, in recent years the Trails Program has primarily been focused on the administration of the Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

The ONLM provides staff support to the New Jersey Trails Council that participates in the RTP project selection process and has played a significant role in lobbying for the development of this (and former) State Trails Plans. The Trails Council could play a significant role in the implementation of some of the recommendations made in this Plan. However, any additional responsibilities for the Trails Council would require additional staff support from ONLM.

The reality is that without adequate staff resources, it is not currently feasible for ONLM or the Trails Council to play a major role in leading the implementation of the many recommendations included in this Plan. The effective implementation of Plan recommendations for addressing issues, achieving goals and fulfilling the Vision for trails in New Jersey is unlikely to occur unless and until additional staff resources are devoted to the Trails Program. Regardless, the role of other organizations within the trails community could be expanded to move forward with recommendations even if no additional state funding is allocated to the state Trails Program.

## The Recreational Trails Program

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is an assistance program of the U. S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration. Under this program, Federal transportation funds are made available to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses.

The RTP funds come from the Federal Highway Trust Fund and represent a portion of the motor fuel excise tax collected from non-highway recreational fuel use: fuel used for off-highway recreation by snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, off-highway motorcycles, and off-highway light trucks.

The RTP funds are distributed to the States by legislative formula: half of the funds are distributed equally among all States, and half are distributed in proportion to the estimated amount of non-highway recreational fuel use in each State. Each State administers its own program.

In New Jersey the program is administered by the ONLM. Each year in September, an application package is distributed by mailing to counties, municipalities and trails-related non-profit organization landowners (the application is also available on the Division of Parks and Forestry's web page). Land on which a trail facility targeted for funding is located must be public land or private land with an easement for public recreational use. Applications are due mid-December. Grant applications are reviewed and evaluated by ONLM staff. Applications are discussed with the Trails Council that assists in the selection of projects recommended to receive funding. Grant ceilings vary from year to year depending on funds available and total applications received. Currently the maximum grant award for non-motorized trail project is \$25,000. Notification of awards is made in August or September of the following year.

## RTP Facts and Trends

### Facts

- NJDEP has received an average of 125 RTP grant applications per year for the last 3 years.
- Approximately 37-38 applicants are awarded grants per year, or about 30% of the applications.
- An average of \$840,000 in RTP funds has been available over the last 3 years.
- The total funding requested over last 3 years has been \$3,044,947; this is over 3 times the amount that is available.

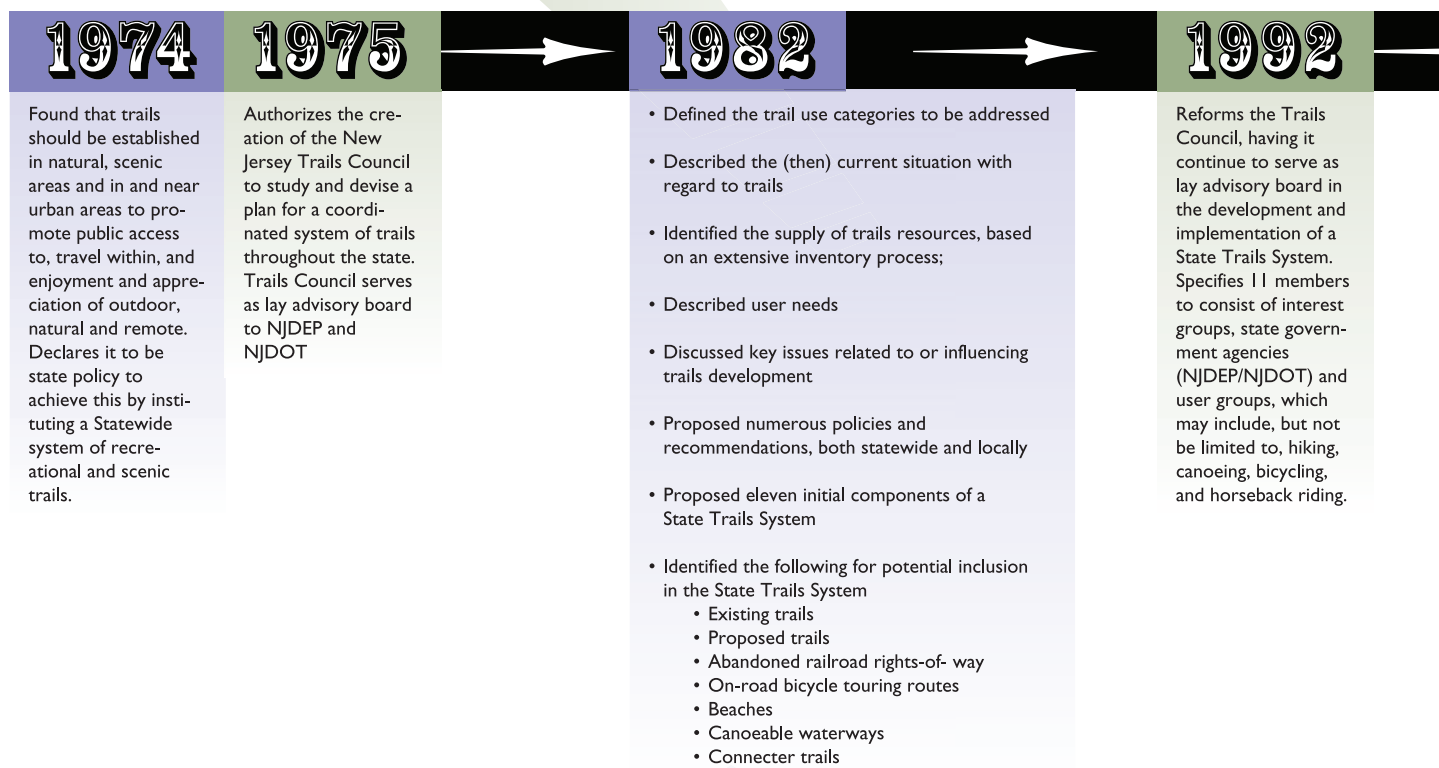
### Trends

- There has been a large increase in the number of non-profit applications and a slight increase in the number of county applications over the past few years. There has been a slight decrease in the number of applications from State Park Service. Approximately 45% of all applications are from municipal government.
- There is approximately twice the number of multi-use trail projects as there are hiking-only projects. The majority of multiple use projects are for bicycle or mountain bike trails that also accommodate foot use such as hiking.
- There has been an increase in water trail applications for canoeing and kayaking.
- There have been relatively few equestrian trail projects, although this past year has seen an increase.
- There have been very few motorized trail applications the last 3 years.
- There has been an increase in the number of applications that include new trail access; last year almost half the applications contained this component.
- A maintenance component was the next most prevalent, followed by development of trail-side, trailhead facilities (parking areas, signs, etc.). These are followed by trail restoration and access for the mobility impaired (although access for the mobility impaired claimed by applicants is not always “legitimate”).





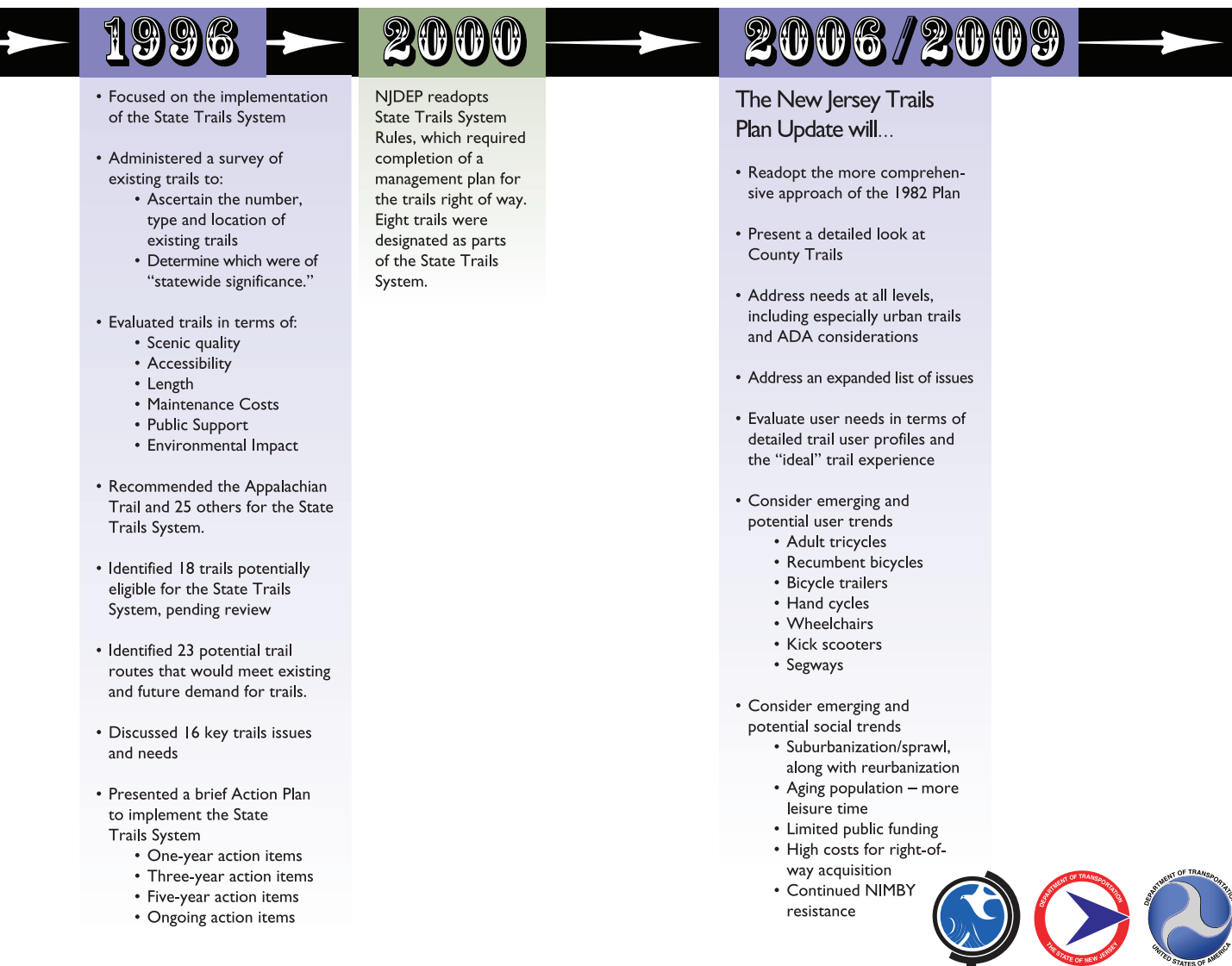
# *“New Jersey Trails System Act” (Chapter 159; P.L.) Chapter 367: Laws of the New Jersey Trails Council The 1982 New Jersey Trails Plan Administrative Order No. 19*



# NJ Trails Plan Update

## The 1996 New Jersey Trails Plan Rules of 2000

## NJ Trails Plan Update



## The New Jersey Trails System

The New Jersey Trails System Act of 1974 declared it state policy and authorized the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to establish a State Trails System, comprised of state scenic trails, state recreation trails and connecting or side trails. The Act designated the Appalachian Trail as the initial component of the system. In 1975, the New Jersey Trails Council was established as a lay advisory board to the NJDEP and NJDOT and the Council was authorized to undertake a study and devise a plan for a coordinated system of trails.

A multi-year effort to fulfill this charge was carried out. The result, *The 1982 New Jersey Trails Plan*, was comprehensive in its scope, providing direction and guidance to those involved in trails development and operations at all levels of government. It identified and defined the trail use and trail user categories, inventoried trails resources, described user needs, discussed key issues related to trails development and proposed numerous policies and recommendations, both general and for specific trail (user) types for the state, counties, and municipalities. The Plan recommended that eleven existing trails (including the Appalachian Trail), nine proposed trails, six existing trails areas, three proposed trails areas, eleven abandoned railroad rights-of-way, seven (on-road) bicycle touring routes, three beaches, twenty canoeable waterways and fourteen connector trails as initial components of the proposed Statewide Trails System (see Appendix). In the following years, no formal action was taken to designate these trails as elements of the **New Jersey Trails System**.

- **Appalachian Trail**
- **Batona Trail**
- **Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park**
- **Paulinskill Valley Trail**
- **Sussex Branch Trail**
- **Belleplain State Forest Trail System**
- **Cedar Creek**
- **Wharton Water Trails,  
52 miles for canoeing and kayaking**
- **Wells Mills County Park Trails System.**

*The 1996 New Jersey Trails Plan* focused almost exclusively on the implementation of the State Trails System. The Division of Parks and Forestry (Office of Natural Lands Management), supported by a reactivated Trails Council, evaluated numerous trails in terms of their meeting a series of proposed guidelines for inclusion in the **New Jersey Trails System**. These guidelines included scenic quality, accessibility, length, multiple use, development and maintenance costs, public support and environmental impact. In addition to the Appalachian Trail, twenty-five trails or trails systems (including “blue” trails) were recommended as being eligible for inclusion in the State Trails System.

In March 2000, NJDEP readopted the State Trails System Rules that outline in detail the procedures and requirements for adding a trail to the system. Of particular note was the requirement that in addition to meeting the procedural and eligibility requirements, the preparation of a management plan was required (see Rules, Appendix). Eight new trails or trails systems were designated as components of the New Jersey Trails System:

Since then, no new trails have been designated to become a part of the System. Considering the many trails and trails systems found to be eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion in the New Jersey Trails System in the 1982 and 1996 plans, this is not because of a lack of candidate trails. It is because few management plans have been prepared for the numerous trails previously found to be eligible or potentially eligible. This includes such noteworthy trails as Patriots’ Path and the Highlands Trail. This is largely attributable to a lack of funding and staff. As a result, benefits that could accrue from

identifying and promoting our most significant trails have yet to be realized. Another deterrent is the misperception, especially among landowners, that the State of New Jersey would have jurisdictional oversight of a trail accepted into the State Trails System.



### New Jersey Department of Transportation

The NJDOT plays a significant role in trails planning and implementation as part of their Pedestrian and Bicycle Program activities. Their local Pedestrian/Bicycle Planning Assistance Program funds local and regional planning efforts that often include or address trails planning. Various funding programs administered by the Department include trails as facilities that may be funded. These include the state funded Bicycle and Safe Streets to

School programs and the federally funded Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School programs. In the most recent year that awards were made under these programs, a total of \$18.43 million was awarded.

NJDOT has advanced many important trail projects throughout New Jersey. For example, NJDOT's Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning has provided funding for route location studies for long distance and regional trails such as the New Jersey section of the East Coast Greenway (ECG) and the Delaware River Heritage Trail. NJDOT has also provided funding to advance more local projects, such as the Lawrence Hopewell Trail. Besides funding trails planning and development, NJDOT hosted the ECG Summit, a gathering of representatives from all counties and municipalities along the trail route to promote the implementation of the ECG. NJDOT has developed and distributes route directions for the interim ECG route, the High Point to Cape May bicycle touring route and a series of over a dozen Tour Guides of shorter bicycle touring routes around the State. NJDOT has and continues to support the development of trails and other bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout New Jersey through a variety of funding and technical assistance programs.

### Federally Managed Trails and Programs

It should be noted that the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manage properties in New Jersey that include trails. The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DWGNRA), Gateway National Recreation Area and Morristown National Historical Park each include foot trails. Morristown National Historical Park includes horse trails and the DWGNRA permits mountain biking on dirt roads and biking on paved roads. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages five National Wildlife Refuge Areas. Five of them (Forsythe, Great Swamp, Supwana, Wallkill River and Cape May NWR) have hiking/nature trails. Supwana and Wallkill offer water trails.

In addition, a number of exemplary trails of local, regional or national significance have received special designations under U.S. Department of the Interior programs as part of the National Trail System and

the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. For example, the Appalachian Trail, the first trail to be included in the State Trails System, is also recognized as a National Scenic Trail, and the Delaware River has been named a National Scenic River with designated water trails. The Long Path, Shore Trail, D&R Canal Multiuse Path and Patriots Path have received designation as National Recreation Trails through application by the managing agencies and organizations. These trails enjoy increased visibility as part of America's national system of trails, and are eligible to receive benefits that can include promotion, technical assistance, networking and access to funding.

The Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) of the National Park Service also offers valuable technical assistance to many New Jersey trail initiatives, including conceptual planning, organizational development and capacity-building. RTCA provides tailored assistance to non-profit and government organizations by invitation on a wide variety of conservation and recreation projects. For example, both Groundwork Elizabeth (Elizabeth River Trail) and the Lower Passaic and Saddle River Alliance (Passaic River Water Trail) received assistance from RTCA to advance their trail initiatives. It is important to seek national designations for New Jersey's significant trails, which both raises awareness and increases eligibility for federal sources of technical assistance and funding.

Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DWGNRA), Gateway National Recreation Area and the Morristown National Historical Park each includes foot trails. Morristown National Historical Park includes horse trails and the DWGNRA permits mountain biking on dirt roads and biking on paved roads. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages five National Wildlife Refuge Areas. Five of them (Forsythe, Great Swamp, Supwana, Wallkill River and Cape May NWR) have hiking/nature trails. Supwana and Wallkill offer water trails.

## Current Planning Initiatives



While funding constraints slowed progress in expanding the State Trails System, interest in trails is strong throughout New Jersey, and many trails and trail networks have been planned and built since the first Trails Plan was published. Local advocates and non-profit organizations are often the champions of trail initiatives. Successful partnerships with municipalities and counties have led to a growing network of trails both planned and built, demonstrating a society-wide recognition of the value of trails to New Jersey communities. There are many prominent regional trails as a result, such as the Iron Belt Trail, the Warren Trail, the Morris Canal Towpath, the Patriots Path, and the Farney Highlands trail network.

Though municipal and county efforts are too numerous to mention, some of the current planning efforts taking place at the regional and state levels that involve or affect trails include:



## Regional Level

North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority – *Access and Mobility 2030 Plan*. This Plan “envision[s] New Jersey as a state where people will choose to walk or bike as part of their multimodal transportation system.”

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission – *Destination 2030*. This Plan focuses on many facets of planning within the Philadelphia-Camden-Trenton region. One area of interest is a proposal for a Regional Greenspace Network within the Land Use section of the plan. The Greenspace Network is proposed to link and expand the region’s existing open space so that parks, forests, meadows, protected farms and streams are joined as an interconnected system. The DVRPC suggests that this is “a form of public infrastructure that is necessary for community health, function and sustainability.”

South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization – *Cumberland County Bike Trail Study*. A section of this study referring to Trail Use Considerations mentions, “local community should determine the types of uses the trail should accommodate and the trails should then be planned and designed to maximize the suitability of desired users and minimize user conflicts.”

New Jersey Highlands Council – *Highlands Draft Regional Master Plan* covers the New Jersey portion of a 4-state Mid-Atlantic Highlands system. The draft plan states that the Highlands Region “currently supports an extensive network of recreational bikeway and pedestrian paths, connecting parks and open spaces.” Recommended policy includes the encouragement of non-vehicular modes of transportation by providing a managed trail system and the establishment of a regional network of trails to provide recreation opportunities as well as eco-tourism and environmental education. Municipal plans will conform to regional plans.

## State Level

*New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* – last completed in March 2003, with a new edition to be completed by the end of 2007 by NJDEP’s Green Acres Program. This Plan is “comprised of seven chapters that discuss New Jersey open space and recreation program and its various elements of open space planning, preservation and funding.”

*New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan* – produced by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Office of Smart Growth. This Plan provides comprehensive goals and strategies regarding various aspects of planning. Within the Plan, a statewide policy section is dedicated to open lands and natural systems. Within this section, trails, greenways and blueways as public open space linkages, open space goals, acquisition priorities and the coordination of regional, county and municipal plans are some of the initiatives mentioned.

*New Jersey Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Phase 2* – Prepared by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, this Plan promotes healthy lifestyles and alternative transportation modes by way of walking and biking. This plan “presents a vision and an action plan for improving the bicycling and walking environment throughout the state, and reflects many significant accomplishments and new directions in bicycle and pedestrian accommodation since the Plan was first published in 1995.”



*New Jersey River to Bay Greenway Program* – The Trust for Public Land, in conjunction with local communities and municipalities, has initiated a River to Bay Greenway Program. It is the program's intent to provide a 70-mile multi-use recreational route in southern New Jersey linking the Delaware River to the Barnegat Bay. This program will unite communities and neighborhoods with new and existing recreation areas, waterfront parks, historic sites, habitat conservation areas, bicycle-pedestrian corridors, state parks and forests, and the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge.

*Garden State Greenways* – Garden State Greenways presents a vision for a statewide, interconnected system of natural resources, including agriculturally rich soils, wetlands, forests, beaches and dunes. Developed by the NJDEP, Rutgers University and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Garden State Greenways is accessible online and is a useful tool for land use planning. Long distance trails and railroad corridors are additional features of Garden State Greenway's interactive map. Their goal is "connect to protect"—connect people with outdoor places and protect New Jersey's water and wildlife.

*Safe Routes to School* – Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a federally-funded program administered by the states (in New Jersey by the NJDOT) designed to enable and encourage children to walk and bike to school. This program is designed to assist communities within New Jersey in developing and implementing projects and programs that encourage students to walk/bike to school while increasing safety.

There are also a number of significant trail initiatives that cross the state, which are in planning and development stages. Some examples of these are:



*High Point to Cape May Bicycle Touring Route* – A 238-mile route from High Point to Cape May, prepared by NJDOT, identifies and provides route directions to a challenging and multi-faceted ride through the center of the state from the northern most point in New Jersey to the southern most point. It is hoped that counties and municipalities will create bicycle networks and trails that link to this spine route.

*Liberty to Water Gap Trail* – A 156-mile trail that runs from Jersey City to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. This trail, which is the first planned cross-state trail for New Jersey, connects several aspects of NJ terrain and communities.

*East Coast Greenway* – The 28-mile trail in the Delaware and Raritan Canal Tow Path located in Somerset and Mercer Counties is one example of New Jersey's contribution to the East Coast Greenway route, proposed to extend from Maine to Florida and connect the major cities of the eastern seaboard. The route through New Jersey extends from Trenton to Jersey City by way of Newark.

# NJ Trails Plan

## 3. The Trails Plan Context

This Plan addresses short-term strategic priorities (1-2 and 3-5 year actions) as well as longer term (6-10 years) and on-going priorities. In updating the Plan, it is important to consider the larger context for trails planning, development and use to ensure that the recommendations acknowledge trends and changing perspectives. Part of the data collection and analysis effort involved the examination of factors and trends that influence trails in New Jersey. In doing so, characteristics of our society and culture emerged that are profoundly interrelated with trails in New Jersey. These interrelationships have a contextual influence on the vision and goals for trails in New Jersey and the type of actions that may be proposed to achieve them. Similarly, a number of important trends were examined that will have a pronounced effect on the demand for trails and future opportunities for trails development. These also must be taken into account in formulating the vision, goals and recommended actions of the Plan.

### Trails and Transportation

Bicycling and walking are two of the most popular trails pursuits. Bicycling and walking are healthy and non-polluting forms of transportation that contribute to our quality of life.

As mentioned previously, trails initially and for most of our existence have been considered and used as transportation facilities. With the emergence of an industrialized, urbanized economy, the evolution of transportation, and the development of mechanized travel to meet our commercial and personal transport needs, many trails were gradually transformed into roadways, railways and highways to accommodate the new modes. Trails that were once the primary links in our transport system became byways eventually serving primarily a recreation, as opposed to a utilitarian, function.

More recently, however, with the enlightened realization and acceptance of the fact that bicycling and walking are efficient, egalitarian, healthy and non-polluting forms of transportation, there has been increasing recognition that these modes have the potential - and are used more and more - for utilitarian as well as for recreational purposes. More recently, however, with

*By linking open  
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the parts.*

– WILLIAM WHYTE  
The Last Landscape,  
1968

the enlightened realization and acceptance of the fact that bicycling and walking are efficient, egalitarian, healthy and non-polluting forms of transportation, there has been increasing recognition that these modes have the potential - and are used more and more - for utilitarian as well as for recreational purposes. The use of trails as a transportation alternative to vehicle use helps to reduce the state's reliance on fossil fuels and can become part of New Jersey's strategy to meet climate change objectives.

The link between trails and transportation is growing stronger, especially in New Jersey. The legislation establishing the Trails Council explicitly stipulates that the Council exists to provide guidance to both NJDEP and NJDOT. Since the Council's inception, NJDOT has participated in and supported the activities of the NJDEP Trails Program and the Trails Council. In fact, through its Pedestrian and Bicycle Program, NJDOT has provided funding for this Plan update.

Since 1990, federal transportation funding legislation has provided two major funding programs for trails: Transportation Enhancements administered in New Jersey by the NJDOT, and the federal Recreational Trails Program funds, administered by NJDEP. In New Jersey, other state transportation funding programs have also been used for trails funding when it was demonstrated that these facilities could serve a "transportation" function.

Given this strengthening relationship, the Plan update recognizes, accepts and promotes the dual function of trails in providing for both recreation and transportation.

## Trails and Economic Development

As observed in an understated fashion by the American Hiking Society, "An organized trail system is a desirable amenity and can contribute to the economical vitality of the community." These economic benefits are both direct and indirect. Trails have been shown to significantly stimulate local economies (especially in rural locations) since trails take visitors to and through centers where they shop, eat and explore the area. A study of the economic impact of a multi-use trail on the Outer Banks in North Carolina has documented an annual economic benefit to the local economy from the construction of the trail equal to ten times the cost of providing the trail facility in the first place.

Photo: NJ Committee of  
The East Coast Greenway



*Landing Lane Bridge, New Brunswick*

The results of the informal Trail User Survey conducted during the planning process indicate that trails and trails use are a significant economic force in New Jersey. The use of trails directly influences the purchase of trails use equipment and amenities such as horses, off-highway vehicles, bicycles, canoes, accessories (including geocaching equipment), clothing, footwear, meals, accommodations and fuel. Almost half of respondents reported that they spend more than \$1000 annually on these purchases and almost a quarter of respondents spend more than \$5000. Surprisingly, over 10 % of respondents indicated that trails and their use of trails influenced the location of their home purchase.

In urban areas, trails located close to or within residential neighborhoods have been shown to have a positive effect on property values and are regarded as an amenity that attracts buyers.

As one of the primary recreational opportunities available in New Jersey's Parks and Forests, trails contribute to the significant economic benefits provided by these facilities. NJDEP has estimated that New Jersey's State Parks and Forests provide total annual gross benefits between \$953 million and \$1.4 billion (2004 dollars) and support an estimated 7,039 jobs. [NJDEP: Division of Science, Research & Technology; *The Economic Value of New Jersey State Parks and Forests*. June 2004, revised November 2006; prepared by William J. Mates, M.S. and Jorge L. Reyes, M.F.]

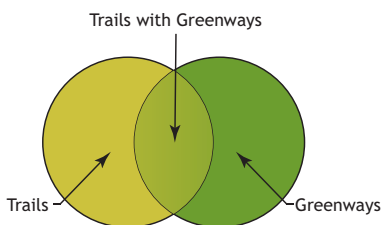


In a state where opportunities for ecotourism abound, trails are an essential part of this burgeoning tourist activity because they provide access to sites for observing and photographing New Jersey's flora and fauna, including unique ecological areas such as the Pine Barrens. Both the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism and the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission have made concerted efforts to promote ecotourism and identify trails where this activity can be enjoyed. Trails have been developed on farms and incorporated into farm operations as part of agri-tourism, attracting visitors, increasing business and contributing to the farming economy.

Finally, trails provide other less tangible but none the less important economic benefits, including reduced health care costs and, when trails serve as a substitute for motor vehicle travel on roadways, less damage and reduced costs for the maintenance and repair of the transportation infrastructure.

## Trails and Greenways

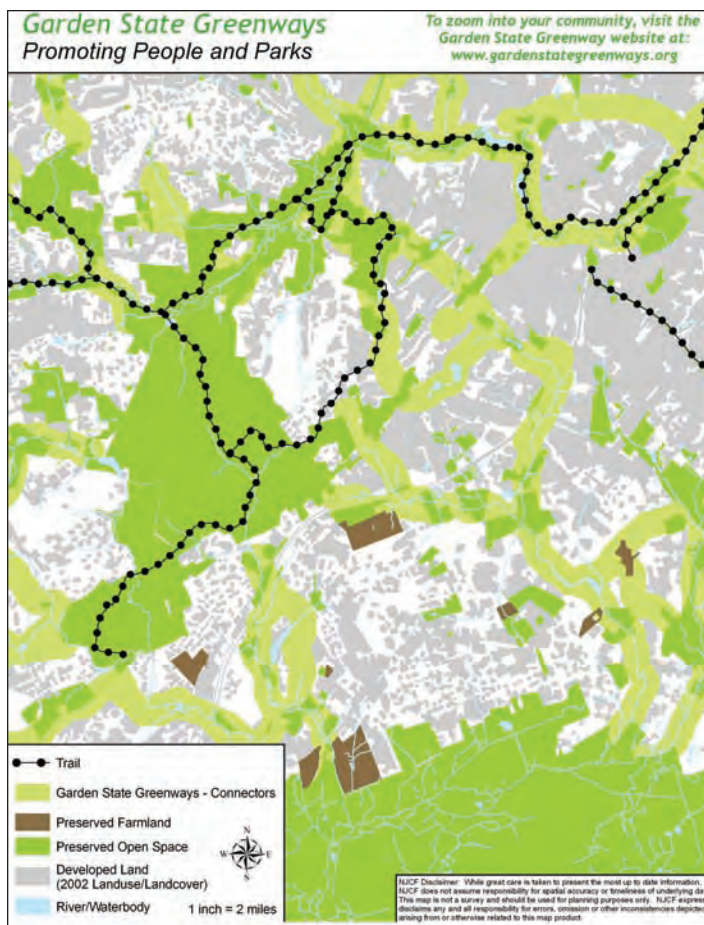
Trails and greenways are not synonymous terms but they are closely interrelated. Greenways are not trails, but most greenways are inclusive of trails. Trails are not greenways, but most trails are located within and are a part of greenways. Both function best when they are linked together in a system.



According to the Garden State Greenways Project, a collaboration of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, NJ Green Acres and Rutgers University, "simply put, a greenway is a corridor of land or open space." Trails as defined in this Trails Plan are linear facilities used for a variety of recreational uses and, in some cases, for transportation.

The primary greenway concept is to establish linkages to create and preserve an interconnected system of land and water habitats. The NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan supports providing networks of greenways and blueways that link recreation and open space land in New Jersey. When greenways incorporate trails, they are a means to pursue recreational activities, e.g., walking, running, biking, birding, canoeing and fishing. They provide opportunities for transportation from one place to another. They enhance community character. These commonalities suggest the need for a strategic partnership between trails and greenway planning in New Jersey. The Garden State Greenways web-based mapping tool for planning greenways illustrates this important connection by including a trails layer within the mapping tool [<http://www.gardenstategreenways.org/>].





## Garden State Greenways

The Garden State Greenways (GSG) program, [www.gardenstategreenways.org](http://www.gardenstategreenways.org), serves as a unique complement to the New Jersey Trails Plan 2008. A collaboration involving the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, The Green Acres Program at NJDEP and the Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis at Rutgers University, GSG is a dynamic online planning tool for all those involved in conserving open space, farmland, and historic areas. This tool assists in identifying hubs – larger areas of undeveloped land with important natural resource values – and linear connectors (a.k.a. trails) between these hubs. GSG provides statewide vision, suggested goals, detailed maps and GIS data and planning tools to help coordinate efforts of private groups and government agencies. The Vision of Garden

State Greenways will be accomplished when residents of New Jersey have access to a trail or greenway within walking distance of their homes.

### Garden State Greenways provides:

- An interactive statewide map of undeveloped lands and potential connectors
- Information to assist in open space planning on local, county and regional levels
- Maps illustrating the Garden State Greenways concept and vision

### Garden State Greenways can be used to:

- Create or update an open space plan
- Apply for Green Acres Planning Incentive (PI) grants
- Apply for a State Farmland Program Planning Incentive Grant (PIG)
- Provide regional context to local or municipal Open Space Plans
- Raise awareness and stimulate discussion about greenways and greenway partnerships
- Identify, target or prioritize tracts of land for preservation, using the:
- Interactive mapping
- Downloadable GIS data
- GIS based planning tool

## Trails and Open Space Preservation

Based on data compiled for the 2008 New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), as of June 30, 2006, New Jersey had preserved 1.3 million acres of public open space and farmland. In addition to state bond issue funding that has been the primary source of open space preservation, 252 local governments (231 municipalities and all 21 counties) assessed an open space tax in 2007 for land preservation, park and recreation projects and historic preservation, collecting over \$300 million in these dedicated funds. Between 2003 and 2006, Green Acres awarded funding to 173 projects sponsored by local governments and conservation organizations for hiking trails, bike trails and walking paths. Green Acres has provided \$32.7 million for state acquisition of lands for trails between 2000 and 2007. All Green Acres funded projects require public access.



Although these funds can generally be used for both acquisition and development, until now the focus has been on acquisition. The public has, by and large, been supportive of these programs, understanding their environmental benefits and their contribution to the quality of life in New Jersey. However, future support of the funding needed to achieve open space goals is not guaranteed. It has been suggested in PAC discussions, interviews and comments by trail users that New Jersey citizens might better understand and

accept additional expenditures for open space preservation if they had more access to the lands that are purchased. Using open space funds to establish trails that enhance public access to preserved open space is a means of increasing public awareness of the value of the preservation programs, and of building public support for future funding allocations.

## Trails and Health

Though most people associate trails with recreation, trails can provide an essential health infrastructure for a community. Since the last Trails Plan was published, there has been increasing evidence to show the link between being active and improved health. Studies show that participating in outdoor activities such as trail use, whether for recreation or transportation, has recognized physical, emotional and mental health benefits. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, increasing daily physical activity can help improve health by controlling weight and high blood pressure, preventing osteoporosis, reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety and lowering risk for type 2 diabetes, heart attack and colon cancer.

What's more, using trails is a free or low cost activity that can be used by a wide variety of people as part of a healthy, active lifestyle, providing physical, mental and emotional benefits that contribute to an improved quality of life.

Trails use is not just beneficial to the individual from a health standpoint. Building trails is cost beneficial from a public health perspective. Studies have shown that there is a direct, positive cost benefit ratio between the cost of building trails and the resultant health care cost benefits.



This being the case, active use of trails for positive health outcomes is being seen more and more by health professionals as an excellent way to encourage people to adopt lifestyle changes that will bring lifetime health benefits. Using trails can result in positive health outcomes, and partnerships with the health community can lead to more trails and more trails use.

However, the full benefits of the health-trails interrelationship have not been fully realized. According to discussions at the Health Focus Group, most health professionals don't understand the importance of advocacy for trails or how to become involved in trail advocacy and trails planning. A lack of information about trail locations, or the lack of trail facilities within communities, makes it problematic for health professions to recommend their use. While many health-related events are held in communities across the state, few promote trail use or are held along trail corridors.

It has been difficult to create common goals and to focus on bringing together trails and health. The public health community has tended to focus its efforts on lower income and minority populations in urban areas that have the greatest risk factors or needs. Trail organizations and providers tend to focus on other populations and locations when promoting or planning trails. Workplace initiatives such as wellness programs are sometimes more concerned with medical screening than promoting increased physical activity. Over the years there has been limited coordination, programs and funding to encourage the link between trails and health. More coordination is needed to realize the mutual benefits of this connection.

A notable exception is the Mayors Wellness Campaign (MWC). MWC was created to equip mayors and other key leaders with the tools to develop and implement active-living initiatives in their communities. The goal of the MWC is to improve health and the quality of life, while reducing health care costs that are associated with obesity. The MWC provides a "toolbox" of workable, user-friendly and inexpensive programs that mayors can implement in their towns. Trails are an ideal complement to many of the program activities and should be included in the "toolbox".

## Changing Demographics - Growth and Migration

According to reports by New Jersey Futures and the U.S. Census Bureau, as of July 2006, New Jersey has grown by 310,213 (3.7%) since the 2000 census; about a quarter of a million (254,766) is due to natural increase (births over deaths) and the remainder is due to net migration. During this time, existing residents have been rearranging themselves and spreading out. Ninety percent or more of the population growth in the fast-growing counties of Burlington, Ocean, Hunterdon and Warren resulted from people moving to those counties from elsewhere in New Jersey [Future Facts, New Jersey Futures January 31, 2006]. Even so, New Jersey is the most densely populated state with 1,176 people per square mile (the national average is 80 people per square mile). Bergen County, with a population of over 900,000, has more residents than six states (Alaska, Delaware, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming).

In general, migration has flowed from more urbanized to less urbanized areas, doubling the amount of new acres developed per new resident and leaving 297 of the state's 566 municipalities below their peak



populations [Future Facts, New Jersey Futures, January 31, 2006]. Though sprawling growth continues apace in the suburban and "green" sections of the state, some of New Jersey's larger cities are, in fact, beginning to turn around. For example Newark's population has climbed above 280,000 for the first time since 1989, after remaining essentially stagnant in the 1990s. In 2004, New Brunswick's population topped 50,000 for the first time. Camden and Trenton have stabilized after population drops in the 1990s. Among the state's 19 largest cities, 14 had population gains between 2000 and 2004. Hoboken tops the list with 4.1 percent growth, followed by Vineland, Elizabeth, Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, Newark, Hackensack, Linden, Passaic, Clifton, Paterson, Plainfield, Atlantic City and Camden [Future Facts, New Jersey Futures, July 29, 2005].

The implication regarding trails is that demand for trails activity and facilities is likely to increase in urban areas as well as in suburban and exurban areas.

## Changing Demographics - Age Structure of Population



In 2006 the first Baby Boomers (the generation born between 1946 and 1964) turned 60 years old. In New Jersey, 17.2 percent of all residents were 60 or older in the 2000 census. In absolute numbers, communities with the largest numbers of residents aged 60-plus include the state's two largest cities, Newark (35,240) and Jersey City (32,013), as well as Manchester and Berkley in Ocean County (each 23,000). [Future Facts, New Jersey Futures, December 19, 2005]

More seniors with more leisure time and more interest in non-competitive and non-extreme recreational pursuits will increase the demand for trails, increase the use of trails, and increase the pressure for new trails. There is likely to be an increase in need/demand for accessible trails to accommodate trail users with a variety of physical/mobility limitations.

## Changing Land Use - Sprawl

New Jersey's loss of undeveloped land continued apace through the 1990s and since. The Garden State lost 90,000 acres of farmland and forest to subdivisions, office parks and cleared lots between 1995 and 2000, matching the pace of development in the previous decade. The pace of development quickened in forested areas, including the Highlands [Future Facts, New Jersey Futures, June 1, 2004].

Every year, the state converts another 18,000 acres or 28 square miles to development, an area roughly two times the size of Jersey City. Population growth alone is not to blame; land is being consumed at roughly three times the rate of population growth. Development or "land use change" has been ranked as the number one threat to New Jersey's environment and its residents by the New Jersey Comparative Risk Project, an independent panel of experts commissioned by the state [Future Facts, New Jersey Futures, September 23, 2003].



Opportunities to preserve undeveloped land diminish as the cost of land rises. In the final analysis, how growth is handled does make a difference. Theoretically, if everyone in the state lived at the density of the densest municipalities, the entire population would fit on 3 percent of the total land area of the state, leaving plenty of open space for everyone. Instead of a land use pattern of vital urban centers and rural communities interspersed among green space, New Jersey's pattern of sprawl development is eliminating the green space. As land is "used up," opportunities to package linear rights-of-way for trails diminish and land costs increase [Future Facts, New Jersey Futures, September 23, 2003]. Full build-out for New Jersey is projected within as little as one or two generations, increasing the urgency both to protect open space and to secure right-of-way for comprehensive trail networks throughout New Jersey.

## Changes in Trail User Types

The most prominent current standards for multi-use trails (AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 1999) use the operational characteristics of a bicycle to determine the design criteria for facilities. Unfortunately, many multi-use trails are not developed or maintained to these standards. Trends suggest there is an increasing number of trail devices used by increasingly diverse groups of trail users.

- Adult tricycles
- Manual and power wheelchairs
- Hand cycles
- Inline skates & skateboards
- Strollers
- Bike trailers
- Tandem bicycles
- Scooters
- Segways
- Dogsleds
- Horse carriages, etc.

The operating characteristics of these devices vary from the bicycle and from each other. In the future, greater consideration will need to be given to identifying the intended uses and users of trails and to applying the appropriate design features necessary to safely accommodate these new uses on multi-use trails.



# NJ Trails Plan

## 4.

## Key Issues and Findings

Many issues and concerns affecting trails in New Jersey were identified during the research and outreach activities undertaken as part of this planning effort. A number of issues were raised as being of significant concern during Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) discussions, stakeholder interviews and the results of the surveys of trails providers and trail users. Understanding the meaning and impact of these issues and the problems they present is essential for crafting a Vision and Goals for trails in New Jersey and for defining strategies to achieve them.

### Funding

Funding and staff resources for the state's Trails Program within NJDEP's Office of Natural Lands Management have not been maintained at a level adequate to meet the demands of advancing the State Trails System as laid out in the authorizing legislation. With only one staff person currently assigned to the Trails Program, relatively few trails have received designation and few outside of NJDEP are aware of the State Trails System or its importance. At current staffing levels, the primary activity of the Trails Program is management of the Recreational Trails Program annual grant funding and staff support for the Trails Council. Consequently, activities such as updating trail inventories, establishing and maintaining an information clearinghouse or Web site, developing, publishing and distributing trail maps and brochures, advancing the State Trails System and other programming, coordination and leadership functions that logically should be assigned to the Trails Program, remain beyond the capacity of the Program.

Funding programs are available for various phases of trails development including NJDEP's Recreational Trails Program (RTP), NJDOT's Transportation Enhancements (TE) program and several state-funded programs that can be used to develop pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Also, recently enacted legislation provides that a portion of the corporate business tax is available for the development of recreation facilities. In general, however, as brought up again and again in trail provider surveys and in Advisory Committee and Focus Group discussions, insufficient levels of funding are available for (or are being applied to) all phases of trails

*Can anybody  
remember when  
the times were  
not hard and  
money was not  
scarce?*

– RALPH WALDO  
EMERSON  
US essayist, 1803–82

development, from planning, design, right-of-way acquisition and construction to maintenance, operations, enforcement and interpretation.

Although funding for the RTP is provided by the federal gas tax on motorized recreational vehicle use, ironically, there are only two specially designated locations on public land in the state where it is legal to operate a Class II ORV without a special permit. Given the costs associated with OHV use, the lack of use opportunities in the state are all the more frustrating for New Jersey OHV users.



Of particular concern is that adequate funding is not available for maintenance and operation of existing trails (see below). The funding sources that are available have tended to be skewed toward the development of new trails. In State Parks and Forests, funding limitations for new trail development, staffing and operations are especially problematic. Inadequate funding for new trail development hampers efforts by land managers to

respond to increasing public need, while placing greater pressure on existing facilities. As a result, opportunities to capitalize on resources of land and people are being lost.

With development trends pointing to “build out” in New Jersey in the foreseeable future, the time available to take the steps necessary to fulfill the vision of this Plan lessens, and the unit cost for doing so increases. In the matter of trails development, what must be done from here on out is likely to become increasingly expensive, in particular, the acquisition of land for key connecting trails and the development of trails in urban areas. Reliance on governmental funding alone is unlikely to meet New Jersey’s trail needs. Strategies for private sector participation should also be explored and developed.

Green Acres funds can be used for acquisition of land for trails and trails development. In the past, this source of funds has been used primarily to acquire parcels for preservation and recreation. In the future, the development of trails facilities that provide public access to these lands, which were acquired for the public good, should be emphasized. Trail stewardship could also be included as an eligible expense. In the past, this source of funds has been used primarily to acquire parcels for preservation and recreation. The requirement to provide public access on all Green Acres funded land preservation projects is a driving force for trail development.

**Finding:** There is an urgent need to expand the sources of funding, both public and private, to put in place and maintain trail facilities as New Jersey continues to develop and approaches “build out” in the foreseeable future.



## A Collection Of State Park Service Superintendent Survey Quotes Gathered During The Public Outreach Effort Of This Plan

There is a marked shortage of personnel, equipment, and funding to adequately maintain trails on a daily basis. There is a serious lack of law enforcement patrol due to a shortage of personnel, inadequate numbers of personnel assigned for patrol purposes, and shifting priorities in the law enforcement arm of the Division.

Ideally trails should offer the visitor a look at scenic areas and examples of various natural resources without compromising on sensitive habitat and endangered species.

A great trail is useless without a good map!

I'd like to see other organized user groups assume ownership and help maintain and improve trails for all to enjoy. The success of the Appalachian Trail Conference and New York New Jersey Trail Conference are model that other groups should emulate.

...Handbooks on proper trail maintenance and construction. Information on standard trail guides and maps for public distribution. Almost every park has a different map design.

**LACK OF SUFFICIENT PARKING IS THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THE PARK.**

Considering the high use, there are very few conflicts.



## Maintenance and Operation of Trails

The most frequently mentioned issue in the user survey is the condition of trails or level of trails maintenance. This includes the condition of trails surfaces, trail head facilities, litter removal, maintenance of blazes and signage. County trail providers and State Park and Forest or Park/Forest Superintendents indicate that providing adequate trail maintenance is a burden. Inadequate maintenance leads to a degradation of facilities and, subsequently, increased costs associated with rebuilding. Operational considerations including security and enforcement are also problematic. Inadequate security and enforcement lead to increased vandalism, illicit or inappropriate use and increasing and unresolved user conflicts. These difficulties relate directly to lack of resources (funding, staff and volunteers) and the need for management plans and guidance on best practices and trails maintenance.

There was an expressed desire on the part of trail providers that organized trails user groups and other volunteers assume “ownership” and assist in maintenance. The success of the Appalachian Trails Conservancy and the New York New Jersey Trails Conference were mentioned as models for user groups assisting in trails maintenance activities that other groups might emulate.

**Finding:** Additional resources including funding, staff, and volunteers are needed to provide a desirable level of maintenance for trails and trailhead facilities.

## Facility Needs

There are a wide variety of trails in New Jersey maintained by state, county and local agencies. However a consistent theme that arose from the surveys of trail users and trail providers (Counties, State Park and Forest or Park/Forest Superintendents) is that there is an inadequate supply of trails and ancillary facilities, especially in peak use time, for trails in general and for specific user groups. Trail providers expressed a belief that continued development of new trails is a necessity in anticipation of increasing trails use (more users) in the future. Of particular concern is a lack of trails for motorized trails use and insufficient access points (put in/take out sites) for “blue trails.” Equestrians cited a loss of trails opportunities in recent years resulting from suburbanization and development. Equestrian trail use has often occurred on privately owned, undeveloped lands through informal arrangements with landowners.

**Finding:** There is an insufficient supply and variety of trails for the various trail user groups and for users of varying skill levels.

## Sharing Trails

The sharing of trails, whether or not they are designed for multiple use, can lead to user conflicts that diminish the trails experience for those involved. Survey results of both trail users and trail providers suggested that such conflicts overall occur infrequently; however, user conflicts were a much discussed and sometimes heatedly debated issue at outreach meetings. When they do occur, conflicts do not ordinarily involve outright hostility or confrontations with other trail users. More often the conflict is passive in nature, a function of the mere presence of or impacts caused by other types of trail users that result in a sense of infringement, annoyance, inconvenience or the diminishment of the trail experience.

Conflicts also occur between trail users and adjacent property owners, and between land owners and illicit trail users trespassing upon and possibly impacting their property.

Photo: NJDEP



*Paulinskill Valley Trail*

Conflicts arise in part from an inadequate supply of trails for the various trail user groups. As a result, different trail users are forced to share, and thereby encounter other trail users who may have widely differing needs and expectations regarding the trails experience. A frequent cause of conflicts can be attributed to multi-use trails that are not in conformance with state of the practice design guidelines in

terms of width or sight distance, thus forcing users into cramped operating conditions.

Conflicts also arise when trail users are inconsiderate of the needs of others on the trail, usually out of thoughtlessness or ignorance of basic trails etiquette. Both user and trail provider survey responses strongly suggest that users need to be better educated about trails etiquette to reduce conflicts and other problems, such as illicit use. This education can be in the form of better trails signing, trail provider information resources, user groups educating their own members or seminars, conferences and publicity campaigns.

**Finding:** Trail user conflicts result from an inadequate supply of single use trails and multi-use trails that are not designed or maintained to accommodate shared use. Enforcement to control illicit/ illegal use and vandalism and user education on trail etiquette is essential but currently insufficient as a consequence of inadequate funding and coordination.

## Motorized Trail Uses

There is a dearth of facilities available for this user group. In fact, there are only two publicly available locations where unlicensed off-road vehicles can be operated without a special events use permit. There is a consensus among both trail users and providers that more motorized trail facilities are essential. Most think that motorized trail use facilities should be made available to some extent, if for no other reason than one of equity, since funding for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is derived from federal taxes on the sale of fuel used by recreational motorized trail users. In addition, RTP rules require states to use a portion of RTP funds for motorized trail facilities. Many trail users and other outdoor enthusiasts have vigorously expressed negative attitudes and opinions regarding motorized trail use both in terms of perceived negative impacts on their trails experience and environmental impacts associated with motorized trail use, especially illicit use.

**Finding:** Motorized trail facilities are grossly inadequate relative to demand. Demand is increasing without relationship to the availability of legal riding venues, public or private.

## Urban Trails

For trails to be accessible for all, trails need to be located in proximity to where people live. In the most densely populated and urbanized state, this means trails need to be located in urban areas. The general consensus from Advisory Committee discussions, surveys and the Urban Trails Focus Group is that there are not enough trails facilities in urban areas, both in absolute terms, and especially in terms of the number of potential trail users available to enjoy them. This includes trails that are within urban areas and reflect the urban experience, and trails or non-motorized accommodations that link urban areas to suburban or rural trails.



Deficits in the supply of urban trails may be influenced by several factors. Trails in urban areas are generally more expensive to build. Urban trails must compete with many other land uses. For example, abandoned railroad corridors that could be used for trails may also be desired by developers. Many political leaders have perceived that ratables obtained through development are a better use of urban land than trails or other open space for quality of life purposes. With a lack of planning

and forethought, opportunities to include trails as part of commercial or residential development may be lost.

On the other hand, urban trails provide significant benefits to urban communities. Urban trails can help protect the environment and positively impact the quality of air and water. Trails originating in urban areas connecting with suburban and rural areas provide access to recreational opportunities. Trails provide an economic stimulus to urban areas. Urban trails typically accommodate walking and bicycling for individuals of all ages and fitness levels and provide the opportunity for family recreation. Pedestrian and bicycle travel are inexpensive, egalitarian and energy efficient modes of transportation, providing access to schools and other community destinations and contributing to healthy active life styles. Urban trails especially provide opportunities for people of different neighborhoods, communities, backgrounds and ethnicities to have a shared social experience. Successful well-utilized trails solve their own security concerns.

Many urban areas are located adjacent to or encompass bodies of water. Locating trails next to the waterfront also provides opportunities to capitalize on the aesthetic and recreational opportunities provided by the juxtaposition of land and water. Waterfront trails provide access for canoeing, kayaking and boating in general, enabling urban waterways to become “blueways” or water trails. A number of successful urban waterfront trails in New Jersey include the Hudson River Walkway, Perth Amboy Waterfront, Atlantic City boardwalk and the Rahway River Greenway.

Finding: Urban trails, including the strategic location of trails that provide connections to neighborhoods, community destinations and natural areas provide significant quality of life benefits to New Jersey's urban dwellers and visitors. More of them are needed.

## Trail Access for People with Sensory and Mobility Impairments

Advisory Committee discussions, survey responses and interviews indicate that there are an insufficient number of trails, including trail head facilities and signage, to serve the needs of people with sensory and mobility impairments. In addition, information on what trails facilities do or do not meet the needs of this group is not conveniently available. Previous New Jersey Trails Plans have also raised this concern and encouraged the use of barrier free design concepts for trails where practicable.

It must be understood that this group is not confined to blind or wheelchair bound persons. In addition to these, barrier free trail head facilities and trails provide improved/increased opportunities for a variety of would be trails users, including: those unable to hear, those using crutches, those using a powered scooter for mobility, the elderly, the very young, those not physically fit and those lacking energy due to health conditions.

While not all trails are suitable for persons with disabilities, just as all trails and difficulty levels are not suitable for all user groups, it is very important that New Jersey does its best to provide its citizens with barrier free access to trail head facilities and trails so that persons with sensory and mobility impairments can take part in trail activities.

Finding: Barrier free design of trails facilities, including trail head area and trail signage, provides trail opportunities to people with sensory and mobility impairments. More of them are needed.

## Planning, Guidelines, Standards, Coordination

As noted in the Urban Trail Focus Group, Advisory Committee discussions and in County and Park Superintendent Surveys, a lack of planning, coordination, guidelines and standards inhibits trails development.

Trails providers have indicated that they require resources and support in the form of facilities development plans and management plans, and of standards and guidelines for trails maintenance, design and signage. It is desirable that the development and operation of parks and trail facilities proceed in accordance with park facilities development plans and trail management plans, and include, where appropriate, coordination with neighboring jurisdictions and other levels of government. Oftentimes, however, the development and operations of park facilities and trails is carried out on an ad hoc basis. The single most significant barrier to the addition of more trails to the State Trails System is the lack of management plans for the trails that have been otherwise determined to be eligible for inclusion to the system.

Municipal, county and state planning processes, in general, do not frequently consider trails. Multi-jurisdictional trails do not always have the participation of all municipalities that a trail could traverse, creating missing links in trail routes or long detours that can only increase the cost



of their development. Most municipalities do not have a plan for trails in their communities. There is often a disconnect within and among agencies involved in planning trails and in planning roads. This is of particular concern where bridge construction and reconstruction is at issue.

**Finding:** More comprehensive planning for trails needs to take place at all levels. Trails providers need appropriate support for the planning and operation of trails facilities in the form of training and guidelines, and more thorough inter- and intra-agency coordination. Trails should be considered in all county and municipal master plans.

## Rights of Way for Trails

More trails and trail connections require more rights of way for trails. Therefore, it is crucial that ALL potential opportunities for trails rights-of-way be explored and utilized to the fullest extent possible. The surveys and Advisory Committee discussions and interviews identified several potential types of opportunities that might serve as rights of ways for trails. Rail rights of way are well known as a desirable location for multi-use trails and New Jersey has some notable examples. Unfortunately, the full potential of rail rights of way for trails has not been reached. Freight rail providers who own these rights of way have shown a reluctance to make them available for trail uses. Sometimes they have tentative or active plans to reestablish rail service, but often they want to hold onto them “just in case....” Rail rights of way, even when in use, can be more thoroughly considered for “rails with trails.” The reluctance to do so seems to be, at the core, a concern over liability and yet federal studies indicate that there are many successful examples of such facilities, including one in Morris County (Traction Line trail).

Utility rights of way present another set of opportunities for trails. The response of utility providers to requests for approval to use their rights of way for trails is mixed. In some cases they have agreed with seeming enthusiasm. In other cases the reaction is an abrupt negative. The question is: why can it be done in one place with apparent ease, but in others, not at all? It seems that who asks and how they ask is more of a deciding factor than the actual issues involved, which again seem to devolve to concerns over liability.

Public access to private land could also play a more significant role for trails, perhaps most notably for equestrians, for access (put-in/take-out spots) to “blue trails” and for hiking trails. In the past, equestrians have taken advantage of this option by making arrangements with private landowners for equestrian use. Unfortunately, these opportunities are jeopardized when other uninvited users trespass, which occurs more frequently with increased development in formerly rural areas. Aside from the issue of intrusion, liability concerns again are thought to play a role in the reluctance of private landowners to allow access for trails purposes; despite the protections afforded them by the Landowners Liability Act. Private land may also provide at least a partial answer to the question: where can motorized trail users go?

Finally, public land acquired for other purposes could be used for trails. Land purchased for open space preservation can be used for appropriately designed trails, if only to provide a means of public access to the property acquired. Easements for trails in appropriate situations could be included as part of farmland preservation or other development rights purchases by public agencies.

Tapping these resources is essential to increase the supply of trails in New Jersey and to interconnect the trails we have now or create in the future.

Finding: There are right of way opportunities available for trails in New Jersey. Ways must be found to preserve these rights of way before these opportunities are lost.

## Information Needs/Promotion of Trails



A very significant outcome of Advisory Committee discussions and a frequent comment in the surveys is that there is insufficient information available on the location and types of trails that exist around the state. In fact, there is much information available, although it is often inconsistently formatted or incomplete, out of date and not easily or conveniently accessible. As a result, there is an unmet demand for trails, since many who would like to enjoy trails and trail users who would like

to use them or seek out new trails experiences are not aware of existing trails. Furthermore, Advisory Committee members have indicated that, despite the existing and increasing popularity of trails, trails development and operation often receive short shrift in public resources since the public and decision makers do not fully understand the pivotal role that trails play (or could play) in terms of recreation, transportation, economic development and other quality of life concerns.

When good trails are provided and adequately publicized, people will use them and in so doing, they will become advocates for protecting the integrity of those trails and for providing more trails.

Finding: Complete and conveniently accessible information about trails, and a public and decision makers that understand the many benefits of trails are essential if the quantity and quality of trails in New Jersey are to increase.



*Lumberville - Raven Rock Pedestrian Bridge, Bull's Island State Park*

# NJ Trails Plan

## 5. A Vision for New Jersey's Trails

### Introduction

A Vision is a picture of an ideal future. A shared vision describes a future towards which all interested parties will take action, both individually and collectively. A shared vision promotes collaboration towards common ends, and also helps to ensure that the actions of all parties working independently support common goals and improved opportunities for trails for all. This Plan presents a Trails Vision comprehensive enough to address the diverse populations who use and enjoy trails and to describe the places and facilities that together comprise a successful statewide trails system.

### Trails Vision:

New Jersey's residents value the diverse networks of trails throughout the state, well-maintained facilities within cities, suburbs and countryside that provide everyone with access to a full range of outdoor recreation activities, transportation alternatives within and among communities, and quality trail experiences.

The Trails Vision for New Jersey describes a future where trail facilities (their diversity, location and condition) provide trail users (New Jersey residents and visitors) with quality experiences. Most important, the Vision describes a future in which everyone recognizes the importance of trails to the quality of life in New Jersey.

This chapter of the Plan presents seven *Vision Themes* that further describe an ideal future for New Jersey Trails, each focusing on a different aspect of trails implied by the Vision. Each Vision Theme is followed by a narrative in the present tense to aid in imagining the future world as it could exist. *Goals* for each Vision Theme describe the outcomes or conditions associated with the realized Vision. *Recommendations* are strategic short or long-term actions

*Cycle trails will  
abound in  
Utopia.*

– H.G. WELLS  
English novelist,  
1866—1946



that must be initiated or advanced to address the issues that are obstacles to achieving the Goals. With a vision for trails in place, it remains to identify a series of actions and priorities that would move New Jersey towards achieving the goals outlined for each of the Vision Themes. This chapter presents a range of actions organized under the seven Vision Themes. Together, these recommendations represent a wide range of ideas generated by the Plan Advisory Committee or through extensive outreach to stakeholders, trail advocates and the general public. The objective of this Plan is to document a full range of possible actions to guide the diverse trails community within New Jersey. It should be considered a menu of options. Ultimately, the order and priority of actions to be taken will depend on willing sponsors, opportunities and available funding.

Some of the recommendations are specific actions that can be completed within a set time period. Others are more general and are intended to be ongoing. A summary chart in Chapter 6 proposes recommendations that might be initiated within the short-term (1-2 years), mid-range (3-5 years) or long-term (6-10 years).

Considered together, the recommendations that follow are very ambitious and would require funding, leadership, cooperation and participation by every level of government, non-profit organizations and both trail advocates and users. There are even initiatives that would require participation by the health and school communities and private business. Naturally, to accomplish all these far-ranging initiatives would require a level of funding, organization and commitment that is unrealistic to expect at the outset.

The Plan identifies the Trails Program of NJDEP as the steward of the Trails Plan, offering leadership and direction to New Jersey's trails community in the implementation of recommendations. However, as was noted earlier, the Trails Program is currently staffed by one person and, overall, has few resources to put towards accomplishing these ambitious goals, many of which would require a high level of staff support and partner coordination. Therefore, increasing the staff and resources of the Trails Program is a critical first step in implementing the Plan.

Many of the recommendations with statewide application can only be realistically advanced, coordinated or supported by the state. With the staffing and resources in place for the Trails Program, other initiatives assigned to NJDEP and/or the Division of Parks and Forestry, or even the Trails Council become possible. Increasing resources on the state level would benefit all of New Jersey's trails community and, ultimately, the general public through expanding opportunities to enjoy well-maintained trails throughout New Jersey's urban, suburban, rural and natural landscapes.

## **Vision Theme Summary:**

### **1. Trails for All:**

All trail user types have access to sustainable recreational trails throughout different regions of New Jersey.

### **2. Trails for Community Connection:**

The ability to find and use trails close-to-home for transportation, recreation and health is within the reach of people of all cultures, ages and abilities in New Jersey communities through an extensive network of community pathways and connecting trails within and among cities and towns.

### 3. Trail Maintenance and Operations:

New Jersey is renowned for the quality of its well maintained and managed trails and trailhead facilities.

### 4. Funding for Trails:

Adequate funding is available to support the Trails Program, trails planning, development, maintenance and operations from a diverse range of public and private sources on the state, regional, county and local levels in New Jersey.

### 5. Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience:

Trail advocates representing every type of trail use join together to support and advance New Jersey trails.

### 6. Trail Information, Communication and Promotion:

Public knowledge about New Jersey trails is at an all time high as a result of a variety of efforts to promote the use of and provide information about trails to the general public, decision-makers, trail advocates, and trail providers.

### 7. Trails Planning and Development:

State, regional, county, local and non-profit groups in New Jersey routinely come together to plan and implement trails projects.



## VISION STATEMENT

New Jersey residents value the diverse networks of trails throughout the state, well-maintained facilities within cities, suburbs and countryside that provide everyone with access to a full range of outdoor recreation activities, transportation alternatives within and among communities, and quality trail experiences.



## *Vision 1 Theme*

# Trails for all

All trail user groups have access to sustainable recreational trails throughout different regions of New Jersey.

## *Imagining an Ideal Future...*

In the future... A proactive approach to accommodate all trail user types in New Jersey has become a model nationwide. Users of all types can access their primary choice of trail within several regions of the state. Both single use and multi-use trails are available for everyone, including motorized and equestrian use.

All trails are located, designed and maintained to accommodate intended uses without compromising the environmental integrity of the land. Single use trails have been designated to separate user groups so as to deliver a quality experience. Each type of user will be able to access a trail solely dedicated to them within the Northern, Central, and Southern regions of the state. Multi-use trails have been designated for sharing trail facilities among various user types so as to maximize the accessibility of trails for all users. A significant increase in accessible trails for the disabled has also enabled those with sensory or mobility impairments to experience nature via trails. Trailhead facilities appropriate for the intended user groups, such as parking, trailers, lighting, restrooms, and signage, are established for every trail.

The increase in the supply of trails can be

attributed to an expansion of the land now available for trails. Abandoned rail corridors, transportation rights-of-way, utility corridors, preserved open space and farmland have all contributed to expanding the land available for trail uses. Cooperative agreements with rail and utility companies and changes in rail-banking statutes have opened up new locations for the development of multi-use trails. Success in providing access to some of the lands conserved by government has been a key development in establishing more trail rights-of-way. As a result, many trails have been extended and connected to form larger networks.

Recreational trails have been formed on designated open space and preserved farmland in areas where environmental conditions can support trail use. Dedicated separate facilities are available on appropriate government and private land through cooperative arrangements. Blueways for canoes and kayaking are finally provided the access they need to enter/exit the water. Equestrians are routinely provided access to water along equestrian trails. Bicycle touring routes provide access to and through New Jersey's scenic landscapes on bicycle-compatible roadways appropriately maintained for bicycle use.

## Goals: Trails for all

- An adequate supply of clearly delineated multi-use and single purpose trails for all trail use groups throughout the state.
- Trail networks formed by extending and connecting existing trails.
- Guidelines and criteria established for locating, designing and maintaining trails for sustainability.
- An increased number of accessible trails for the sensory or mobility impaired throughout the state.
- Accommodation of and incentives for including trails in government land management and conservation programs and policies.

## Recommendations: Trails for all

### Needs Assessment

- 1) The Trails Council and a consortium of trails organizations should identify a lead organization(s) and funding to regularly perform a comprehensive survey or study of trail users to better understand trail use and trail user needs; this should complement and be coordinated with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. A statewide needs assessment should then be conducted to determine deficiencies in the supply of trail facilities (including trail head facilities) for the various trail user types and to establish priorities for trail development, based on the Trails Inventory (see Information and Promotion).

### Trail Development Priorities

- 2) As much as possible, prioritize trail development based on results of needs assessments to provide the types of quality facilities that meet trail user demand and address facility supply deficiencies.
- 3) Vigorously pursue the acquisition and development of major multiple use trails on their own rights of way, especially on rail rights of way (includes rails with trails).

### Expanding Trail Development Opportunities

- 4) Explore opportunities to provide sustainable trail access on publicly owned preserved open space, developing criteria for the location and type of trail to ensure environmental integrity.
- 5) Incorporate trails use as an element of the farmland preservation program, to be included in negotiations where appropriate.
- 6) Encourage private landowners to make lands available to trail use; develop and incorporate incentives that directly address landowner liability concerns. For example, equestrian trail users have traditionally entered into arrangements with private landowners to access trails, and would benefit from strategies that alleviate landowner resistance based on liability concerns. Non-profit organizations such as land trusts may lead this initiative in partnership with other trail advocacy organizations.



## Facilities for All Trail Activities

- 7) Expand trails opportunities for those trail uses for which deficits are known to exist. In particular there should be a focus on providing trails for the mobility and sensory impaired, trails or areas for motorized trail uses and trailhead facilities (put in-take out) for “blue” trails.
- 8) Establish water trails and associated facilities throughout New Jersey. Raise awareness of opportunities for water trails, facilitate coordination and address the special needs of this fast growing trail use. Blue trails require parking to accommodate the transport of boats, canoes, kayaks, etc., designated put-in/ take-out areas and signage.
- 9) Establish appropriate and sustainable motorized (OHV) facilities including both trails and OHV parks, with a focus on private initiatives. Develop a proactive NJ Off-Highway Recreational Vehicle strategy with the participation of state agencies (NJDEP, New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission) and motorized trail organizations, modeling successful strategies applied in other Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states with similar size and population characteristics. A portion of OHV registration fees could help provide funding towards developing OHV parks and trail facilities, safety education, environmental education, trail signage and enforcement. Providing designated legal riding facilities would contribute towards reducing illegal OHV trail use. In addition, NJDEP's Off-Road Vehicle Use Policy Directive should be revised to conform to the applicable codes of the state land management agencies, such as the State Park Service Code.

## *Vision 2 Theme*

# Trails for Community Connections

**The ability to find and use trails close-to-home for transportation, recreation and health is within the reach of people of all cultures, ages and abilities in New Jersey communities through an extensive network of community pathways and connecting trails within and among cities and towns.**

## *Imagining an Ideal Future...*

In the future... With urban and town-centered trails established in communities throughout the state, New Jersey citizens of all cultures, ages and abilities are choosing community pathways for transportation to key destinations - without stepping foot in motorized vehicles. Trails are an adjunct to networks of sidewalks and bicycle routes along roads within communities that connect neighborhoods to public transportation systems, downtowns, parks and public places. Community pathways also provide opportunities for New Jerseyans to enjoy outdoor recreation and nature close to home.

The benefits of urban trails are well known and have been proven to boost economic activity, promote healthy lifestyles and decrease traffic congestion and emissions. This statewide initiative to establish community pathways where people live, work, learn and play has been energized by the collaboration of partners that in the past had little or no involvement with New Jersey trails. Health professionals, school districts, local chambers of commerce, environmental organizations, neighborhood associations and corpora-

tions and businesses, large and small, have joined municipal governments and trail advocates to establish trails within New Jersey's walkable and bikeable communities. From cities to small towns, there are networks of safe and appealing corridors that make use of off-road trails, sidewalks and bicycle compatible roadways to reach key community destinations.

New Jersey's cities and towns are also connected through an extensive intercommunity network of trails, including both on-road bicycle facilities and off-road walking and biking trails. Many connecting trails have been established within linear greenways that link parks and natural areas throughout the state. In addition to serving as non-motorized transportation corridors, these greenway trails are located, designed and maintained for their environmental benefits, protecting stream corridors and water sources, filtering storm water and providing natural sanctuaries for native trees, plants and wildlife. This extensive network of connecting trails provides exceptional outdoor recreational and educational venues for New Jersey's town and city dwellers.

## Goals: Community Connections

- Community pathway networks within New Jersey's population centers that provide a walking trail within 10 minutes of every resident and non-motorized connection to neighborhoods, schools, workplaces and public destinations.
- An extensive network of connecting trails throughout New Jersey for safe and easy movement between communities.
- An extensive network of greenway trails connecting parks and natural areas.
- Diverse partnerships among health, education, environmental, business and government sectors to advance community pathway networks and trails connecting communities.
- Society-wide recognition that community pathway networks support public health, community vitality and environmental protection.

## Recommendations: Community Connections

### Trail Development Priorities

- 1) Complete key linkages to establish trails continuity (within existing rights of way) or connections between trails to create longer trails opportunities. Provide bicycle and walking trails connecting residential areas with parks, major trails and trails systems. Capitalize on the transportation value of trails, using them to connect to non-park destinations.
- 2) Municipalities should seek to acquire property that would serve as rights-of way for trails connecting neighborhoods and adjacent communities. Counties should seek to acquire property that would serve as rights-of way for trails (and ultimately build trails) that connect regions within the county, and connect with trails or logical termini in adjacent counties.

### Expanding Trail Development Opportunities

- 3) Establish state regulatory or legislative means whereby a 'rail-banked', disused or abandoned rail right-of-way can include trail development as an interim or long-term use and existing rails may be removed. Explore opportunities for trails using utility rights of way and, where appropriate, roadway rights of way.
- 4) Explicitly include trails in the New Jersey Safe Routes to School Program that can serve as travel routes to school.
- 5) Include trails and pedestrian facilities in development, redevelopment and transit proposals.



## Vision 3 Theme

# Trail Maintenance and Operations

New Jersey is renowned for the quality of its well maintained and managed trails and trailhead facilities.

## *Imagining an Ideal Future...*

In the future... Trails and a quality trails experience for users are a primary focus among New Jersey State Park Service Supervisors and other managers of recreation programs. Management Plans have been developed for an expanding New Jersey Trails System and other significant trails, based on simplified models that can easily be prepared and updated. With a generally adequate supply and variety of trails in the state, a “fix it first” approach has been instituted by most trail provider/managers. Trail maintenance guidelines have been developed and are readily available. A large, organized and active cadre of volunteers plays a major role in the maintenance of New Jersey trails and trailhead facilities.

Trails organizations have contributed to the education of trail users, who collaborate to support rules and their enforcement. Because of efforts to designate trails for specific uses, to provide maps and information and to post trail rules on-site, security and enforcement on trails has improved. Stable funding and the appropriate staffing of security personnel, including innovative partnerships with governmental and non-profit organizations to extend resources, contribute to safety and reduce illicit use. Effective community programs to support maintenance and enforcement on community pathways within cities and towns have been replicated around the state.

## Goals: Trail Maintenance and Operations

- Trail maintenance guidelines and training for all those involved in trail maintenance.
- Trail Management Plans for significant state and regional trails based on simplified and widely available models.
- Trail volunteer programs in all counties and for all state parks, including training and education.
- Stable funding and staffing to maintain trails and trail head facilities, provide security and limit illicit use of trails.



- Innovative public private partnerships to extend resources and staffing for maintenance and security, especially for community pathways within cities and towns.

## **Recommendations: Trail Maintenance and Operations**

### **Trail Maintenance Policies, Priorities and Funding**

- 1) State, county and municipal trail providers should institute policies to ensure a high standard of trail maintenance and security enforcement and support the policies through targeted funding for maintenance and operations.
- 2) NJDEP's State Park Service should support maintenance for state-owned trails through the provision of roving trail crews for labor and equipment intensive projects and targeted funding for trail maintenance. State, county and municipal trail providers should prioritize improvements to existing trails and trailhead facilities, sign systems and other user amenities to enhance the accessibility of trails for all intended users.

### **Trail Guidelines and Rating System**

- 3) A consortium of trails groups, with the participation of the Trails Program, should endorse guidelines for trail maintenance to assist trail providers and maintainers.
- 4) A consortium of trails groups, with the participation of the Trails Program should endorse a Universal Trail Rating System. Trail providers and maintainers should evaluate, publish and post information about trail accessibility based on a Universal Trail Rating System for trail providers and users.

### **Volunteer Programs**

- 5) State, county and municipal trail providers should engage volunteers in trail maintenance through cooperative programs and partnerships with non-profit organizations. Trail volunteer programs should be based on the (proposed) Statewide Trails Volunteer Program for training and using trail volunteers (see Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience). Obstacles to the use of volunteers, such as liability, should be addressed and removed.
- 6) State, county and municipal trail providers should participate in the (proposed) statewide volunteer awards program to recognize trail volunteers for their contribution to New Jersey Trails (see Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience).

## *Vision 4 Theme*

# Funding for Trails

**Adequate funding is available to support the Trails Program, trails planning, development, maintenance and operations from a diverse range of public and private sources on the state, regional, county and local levels in New Jersey.**

## *Imagining an Ideal Future...*

In the future... Trails Program staffing and resources are adequate to support management of the State Trails System, the Trails Council and the implementation of priority strategies in the New Jersey Trails Plan. With trail program goals and priorities established and a statewide inventory of trails completed, a financial plan has been developed to support initiatives of the state Trails Program. Creative mechanisms and renewed financial support from government agencies, corporate philanthropy and individual contributions now provide a steady source of funding for trail development, maintenance and operations throughout New Jersey.

Increases in state funding and cooperative efforts among state agencies have ensured appropriate levels of support for planning, design, construction and management of state trails. Trails are routinely funded through yearly budgets, dedicated tax assessments, Green Acres and capital

improvement programs because their value to the community is understood and supported by elected officials and citizens. Trails are now also funded from sources related to tourism, health, economic development, transportation, and additional public and private sources.

Both county and municipal governments also allocate funding for trails through a variety of mechanisms, from yearly budgets and dedicated tax assessments to public-private partnerships with “friends” groups and trail organizations. These dollars are used to leverage state and federal funding, extending their value in expanding trail networks. Through municipal ordinances, developers routinely participate in contributing land and resources towards trail development, as the value of trails as community pathways through developments has been confirmed and widely accepted.

## Goals: Funding for Trails

- Trail Program staffing and resources are adequate to support the State Trails System and implementation of the NJ Trails Plan.
- Financial plan to support the state’s trail program and to identify priorities and funding needs.

- Adequate dedicated funding for trails planning, development, maintenance and operation on the state, county and local levels.
- Diversification of state level funding sources through related programs.
- Corporate/private sponsorship and funding program.
- Widely adopted municipal ordinances to ensure the financial participation of developers.

## Recommendations: Funding for Trails

### State, County and Local Funding

- 1) State, counties and municipalities should provide funding for trails planning and development as needed, and provide a stable and dedicated source of funding for operations, maintenance and enforcement based on needs assessments.
- 2) NJDEP should provide additional staff support for the State Trails Program to enable the state to assume the role of the steward, monitor and prime implementer of New Jersey's Trails Plan (see Trails Planning and Development).
- 3) The state should provide resources and allocate funds to support, maintain and expand the New Jersey Trails System, and provide incentive points to designated trails applying for funding through state managed funding sources (Recreational Trails Program).
- 4) A funding mechanism should be developed for the preparation of management plans for eligible trails. New Jersey State Park Service should prepare a Needs Assessment and Financial Plan that would include an analysis of trails funding needs for current operations, including staffing and trail facility improvements, and for ongoing capital funding for expansion of trail facilities on state parks and forests (see Trails Planning and Development).
- 5) The state and counties should provide funding incentives to encourage multi-jurisdictional trail initiatives.
- 6) Local governments should consider taxing authorities, bond initiatives and innovative land development strategies to fund development of trails and community pathways networks.

### Maximize Trails Funding Sources

- 7) Focus New Jersey's Recreational Trails Program funding guidelines to support Trails Plan goals by funding projects that serve as successful models of achieving Trails Program objectives. Examples might be to prioritize connecting trails and to increase funding ceilings for significant projects that meet Trails Program objectives.
- 8) Explore the potential to increase the share of Transportation Enhancements funding for trails development.

- 9) Reestablish and maintain funding programs (administered by NJDOT) that provide state funds for the development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- 10) Ensure that trails are an eligible expense in the allocation of funding from the corporate business tax approved for recreation facility development.

### **Diversify Funding Sources**

- 11) Include trails and trails-related improvements as a specified category eligible to receive funding within Green Acres or other similar funding source authorized through legislation. This categorical program would emphasize trails right of way acquisition and development in cases where trails would not compromise conservation objectives or environmental integrity, and would not compete with other Green Acres funding objectives, i.e. parks and open space. A portion could be used for stewardship purposes, be available to state agencies, and include both development and maintenance of trails. It should be noted that trails are currently eligible for Green Acres acquisition and development funding.
- 12) Funds from a future OHV registration (see Trails for All) should be applied towards the provision of dedicated OHV trails and parks, and for education programs. A NJ OHV Task Force comprised of OHV user groups should be established to oversee the expenditure of these funds.
- 13) Explore and implement non-traditional strategies for private, corporate and non-profit participation in supporting trails and trail-related improvements through the provision of funding and other resources on state, county and local levels. Strategies may include short-term targeted initiatives benefiting specific trail projects as well as longer-term mechanisms that support broader Trails Program initiatives. “Friends groups,” revolving trust funds, mitigation banking, corporate land donations, materials and resource donations and health and fitness sector participation are some of the strategies that have been successfully applied. Through ongoing training, workshops and conferences (see Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience), these strategies for non-traditional funding and successful program examples could be shared with trail providers and advocates throughout the state.

### **Document Existing and Potential Funding Resources**

- 14) Develop a New Jersey Trails Funding Plan that identifies all existing and prospective sources of funding for trails development, implementation and operations. Coupled with the results of the User Needs and the Trails Needs Assessments, the Funding Plan would serve as a basis for the allocation of additional public funding for trails.
- 15) Maintain and distribute a trails funding information resource for government and non-profit use, with special emphasis on non-traditional sources and strategies.



A large, stylized sunburst graphic in shades of green and yellow, with rays emanating from a central semi-circle at the bottom. The rays extend upwards and outwards, framing the text.

## *Vision 5 Theme*

# Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience

Trail advocates representing every type of trail use  
join together to support and advance New Jersey trails.

### *Imagining an Ideal Future...*

In the future... Recognizing an underlying common interest and the need to share limited land resources, trail organizations have been collaborating regularly to cultivate understanding, address specific needs of trail user groups, resolve differences and implement innovative solutions. Working together, trail advocates have participated in advancing trail policies and programs through partnerships with state, regional, county and local governments and in guiding decision-makers to establish an adequate supply of sustainable trails for all users.

In addition to designated single use trails for pursuits such as hiking, mountain biking and motorcycling, new multi-use trails have been developed. Trail advocates have played a significant role in supporting the establishment of an adequate supply of trails of all types, promoting good trail design and educating users to increase safety and satisfaction with trail experiences throughout New Jersey.

The partnership to develop innovative solutions to provide motorized recreation facilities is a model demonstrating the value of trail organization participation in statewide policies and programs. Motorized recreational trail organiza-

tions played a key role in establishing dedicated motorized trails, trail systems and areas on both private and government controlled lands meeting environmental criteria developed in partnership with the state. Other trail organizations supported the initiative, recognizing that the provision of facilities located, designed and maintained for sustainable motorized use reduces illegal use in conjunction with improved enforcement.

With a direct line of communication to New Jersey's many trail users, trail organizations have been educating trail users about trail etiquette and encouraging stewardship for the land and respect for other trail users. Trail organizations have mobilized trail users to become a powerful resource in support of trails. Trained volunteers coordinated through formal partnerships between trail organizations and land managers have become an indispensable workforce for establishing and maintaining trails. Statewide volunteer programs extend the ability of government to manage the growing network of trails throughout New Jersey. In addition, trail organizations have been sharing their expertise in working with local governments to expand trail networks across multiple jurisdictions.

## Goals: Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience

- Statewide coalition of Trail Organizations.
- Trail Organization participation in formulation of statewide trail policies and programs: trail inventory and supply, design standards, user education and volunteer programs.
- Partnerships between Trail Organizations and state, county and local governments to provide technical assistance.
- Statewide volunteer training and support program.
- Trail user education programs.

## Recommendations: Trail Advocates and the Trail Experience

### State or Regional Conference/Workshops

- 1) The Trails Council, in partnership with the state and trail advocacy organizations, should provide regular forums (state and regional conference, workshops) that will enable different trail user groups to interact and to identify and explore common interests, goals and strategies for cooperation. The Trails Council and trails advocacy organizations should participate in conferences/ workshops with related interest groups that share common objectives. For example, bicycle and pedestrian advocates support walkable and bikeable communities and community pathway networks, which should include trails wherever possible. Participation in the National Trails Training Partnership (NTTP) should be encouraged. Conferences and workshops can highlight the many national, state and regional resources for planning, establishing and maintaining specific trail facility types.

### Statewide Trail User Education

- 2) Raise trail user awareness of trail etiquette and rules, especially in relation to multi-use trails. A statewide campaign with participation from all types of Trails Organizations could include the development of brochures, publications and trails signage. Establish a Task Force for Trail Education, convened under the auspices of the Trails Council, to meet on a regular basis for the purpose of addressing issues relating to user group needs, etiquette and education. In particular, this Task Force should address issues specific to multi-use trails.

### Statewide Trails Volunteer Program

- 3) Integrate trails into NJDEP's volunteer program in collaboration with trail organizations and trail providers to train volunteers in trail maintenance and to encourage trail managers to utilize this resource. This program can then be replicated throughout the state, with training available on a statewide and regional basis for trail managers at the state, county and local levels. Comprehensively address policy and institutional issues that commonly inhibit volunteer programs, such as liability. Develop a statewide volunteer awards program to recognize trail volunteers for their contribution to New Jersey Trails.

### Specialty Technical Assistance

- 4) Under the auspices of the Trails Council, engage trails organizations in providing technical assis-

tance in the development of statewide trails initiatives, programs and policies. Promote opportunities for trails advocacy organizations to provide technical assistance through public and private partnership. Identify and establish a directory of experts representing various types of trail uses to provide guidance to trail providers on a project basis, from informal “ask the experts” web forums to “in person” evaluation of specific trails for state, county and municipal land managers.

## *Vision 6 Theme*

### Trail Information, Communication and Promotion

Public knowledge about trails is at an all time high as a result of a variety of efforts to promote the use of and provide information about trails to the general public, decision-makers, trail advocates, and trail providers.

#### *Imagining an Ideal Future...*

In the future... The availability of information about trails and their many benefits has been crucial to increasing trail use and trail stewardship in New Jersey. The State Trails System has expanded and is promoted as a centerpiece in the state's network of trails. As a result of a comprehensive trails inventory, detailed trail information and maps of New Jersey trails are readily available to the general public from a variety of sources. Coordination of trail information for all of New Jersey has made it possible to access information easily through use of the Internet, including the location, type, length, challenge/difficulty, accessibility, uses, restrictions, amenities and nearby facilities associated with each trail. Signage at trail heads invites people to try a trail.

Statewide programs promoting the benefits of trails in conjunction with increased funding for trails development has led to greater participation

among counties and municipalities in developing trail networks. Information on topics such as funding and design, along with guidelines and studies, are readily available to assist land managers in dealing with common challenges associated with trail planning, development and operations.

Spreading the word on trails is a key objective of public agencies and non-profit organizations such as land conservation agencies and trail advocacy groups. The public and decision makers now immediately recognize that the term “outdoor recreation” is inclusive of trails, and trails use has been confirmed as the most popular form of outdoor recreation in New Jersey. Statewide trail promotion initiatives targeted to specific audiences have led to increased trail use by populations that traditionally have had little exposure and access to trails, particularly in cities and towns.

## Goals: Trail Information, Communication and Promotion

- Widely available maps and information on trails through a variety of sources.
- An informed public, including decision-makers, regarding trail benefits and the role of trails in supporting active, healthy lifestyles.
- An invigorated State Trails System as the centerpiece of the state trails network.
- Guidance documents and supporting information on planning, development and operations widely available to trail providers.
- Trails and greenways promoted as key connections between parklands, rivers, historic sites and other natural resources.
- Promotion of trails are essential aspects of state and regional ecotourism plans
- Statewide trail promotion initiatives targeted to specific audiences.

## Recommendations: Trail Information, Communication and Promotion

### Statewide Trails Inventory

- 1) State, counties and trails organizations should collaborate in the development and regular updating of a comprehensive state sponsored inventory of trails of all types and make this information available to all through a web-based clearinghouse (see item 3 below). Objectives are to provide the public with readily available information about the location, type, length, challenge/difficulty, accessibility, uses, restrictions and amenities associated with each trail, and to facilitate trails planning by trail providers. The inventory should be established as a database covering the entire state of New Jersey, be regularly updated, and include ADA/Accessibility information.

The Trails Council and a consortium of trails organizations should collaborate to identify a lead organization and identify funding to host, manage and complete the statewide inventory. However, federal, state and county governments and other organizations that provide and manage trails should share the responsibility for collecting, preparing and updating trail data. The state and each county should be responsible for the inventory of trails within their jurisdictions. Each county should be responsible for identifying major municipal trails within county boundaries. The emphasis should be on county, regional and state level trails that serve a geographically broad constituency.

In partnership with county government and other organizations that provide and manage trails (including Federal agency representatives), the lead organization should collaboratively develop common standards or guidelines for trails data collection and mapping to support consistency in the types of information in the inventory. A standard database format can be developed to aid participants in preparing uniform information. GIS maps should be developed for the inventoried trails, and when possible, routes should be verified using GPS. GIS maps can also be used as a planning tool for establishing new routes or connectors between trails, or used for other land use planning purposes.



## Trails Research and Studies

- 2) NJDEP should establish partnerships with other state agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations to conduct research and develop studies and information with specific relevance to New Jersey. Examples of such studies might include research on the impact of trail development on property values, economic impacts of recreational trails, landowner liability and case law, analysis of trail development costs, safety, use of rail and utility corridors, and case studies on innovative public and private funding strategies and partnerships.

## Trails Clearinghouse

- 3) Develop a comprehensive Web-based clearinghouse of trail information for both trail users and trail providers that is part of or complements the Garden State Greenways interactive Website. The clearinghouse may be developed, hosted and managed by willing non-profit or educational institutions. In addition to posting information available through the New Jersey Trails Program, which should be more prominently positioned on the NJDEP Website, the Website should include links to NJDEP, NJDOT and sites maintained and updated by others. The site could include a New Jersey Trails list serve or forum to supplement the information resources, facilitating communication between and among trail providers, advocates and users regarding New Jersey-specific news, issues and discussion. Clearinghouse information may include:
  - Trails location and use information (see Statewide Trails Inventory above).
  - List of agencies and organizations involved with trails.
  - Benefits of trails, New Jersey case studies and related documentation.
  - Universal Trail Rating System guidance for trail providers and users.
  - County and Municipal Toolkit with trails planning, development and operating resources, such as sample ordinances, guide for working with developers, how-to-do a trail plan, funding sources, promotion, marketing trails, etc.
  - NJ Trail design guidance and a Best Practice Guide.
  - Trail maintenance guidance.

## Trails Promotion

- 4) The Trails Council should initiate the development of a statewide map (or series of maps) of New Jersey's major trails, including open trails designated by the New Jersey Trails System and interstate trails, ensuring that every major trail type and use is represented. The map could also identify cities and towns that have demonstrated a commitment to implementing community pathway networks. This map would be the centerpiece of promotional campaigns for New Jersey's Trails.
- 5) The Trails Council should foster a trails colloquium or formal alliance of constituent trail groups to lead a statewide trails promotion campaign. The objective of the campaign would be to promote the value of trails in relationship to other societal priorities such as open space conservation, greenways and environmental protection, alternative transportation, walkable communities, Safe Routes to School, public health, active living initiatives, tourism and economic development, etc. The trails alliance may oversee a range of promotional activities, such as:
  - Develop promotional materials that can be distributed by trail advocates statewide.
  - Establish an annual awards program to recognize communities that complete community pathway initiatives.

- Develop and disseminate a newsletter that covers trails activity in New Jersey.
  - Conduct an annual statewide trails event designed to raise the awareness on the part of the public and governmental leaders about New Jersey's trails and community pathways for all.
- 6) State, counties and municipalities should develop or expand existing programs (e.g., Passport Program) to increase awareness of community pathways and trail networks within New Jersey's cities and towns. This could include a challenge to cities and towns to develop loop trails that link public destinations and recognition of model examples.
- 7) Trail promotion should routinely emphasize public health benefits, and the public health and medical community should be encouraged to participate in trail promotion programs from the state to local levels. More coordination between the trails and the health community is needed to realize the mutual benefits of this connection.

A large, stylized sunburst graphic in shades of green and yellow, with rays emanating from a central semi-circle at the bottom. The rays spread outwards and upwards, framing the text below.

## *Vision 7 Theme*

# Trails Planning and Development

State, regional, county, local and non-profit groups in New Jersey routinely come together to plan and implement trails projects.

## *Imagining an Ideal Future...*

In the future... Trails are a major consideration in transportation, tourism, economic development, open space and recreation planning. Training manuals on various aspects of trails planning have been developed and made available to trails providers. Best practices guidelines for designing trails have been prepared and are widely available. Professional development workshops on the technical aspects of trails planning and implementation have also been periodically made available to trails providers. Innovative approaches to provide state, county and local trail providers with limited and targeted technical assistance related to trail planning, development and maintenance reduce costs and accelerate project schedules. Permitting processes are coordinated and streamlined to fast track trail development.

Trails are routinely and explicitly considered in

municipal Master Plans in the recreation element and circulation element, or as a stand-alone element. Local development projects are routinely reviewed to ensure that trails both on- and off-site are consistent with local trails plans. All counties have Trails Plans or Recreation, Transportation and Open Space Plans that explicitly address trails and have been developed in coordination/consultation with neighboring counties, the state, and municipalities within their jurisdictions. The State Trails Plan is routinely updated, and many new trails have been added to the State Trails System. The long-range plans of other state agencies incorporate consideration of trails.

An expanding State Trails System that includes a wide variety of exemplary trails of regional and statewide significance.

## Goals: Trails Planning and Development

- Cooperative trails planning and decision making within and among all levels of government.
- Trails built into land use laws so that developers are required to plan for trails as part of their site plans
- Consistent, comprehensive guidelines and standards and training available for all aspects of trail planning and design.

- Technical assistance available to support trail planning, development and operations.
- Coordinated and streamlined permitting processes.

## Recommendations: Trails Planning and Development

### Trails Planning

- 1) NJDEP should assume the role of steward, monitor and prime implementer of the New Jersey Trails Plan and update the Plan periodically as needed, such as every ten years).
- 2) NJDEP should continue to include and emphasize trail activities as part of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which is periodically conducted to provide statewide policy direction and to fulfill the agency's recreation and preservation mandate. The SCORP serves as a status report and as overall guideline for recreation, resource preservation, planning and development. Outdoor recreation on New Jersey's trails should be a significant component of the SCORP to provide support for implementing the New Jersey Trails Plan in relation to the wider context of outdoor recreation and preservation.
- 3) NJDEP should aspire to accommodate recreational trail uses with dedicated single use and multi-use trails on state parks and forests based on a needs assessment (see Trails for All and Community Connections), an inventory of existing facilities (see Information, Communication and Promotion) and an analysis of the environmental characteristics of the land. The objective is to identify opportunities for accommodating trail uses within the state parks and forest system based on environmental and other land use characteristics, rather than to accommodate uses within each state park or forest. A special emphasis should be given to establishing and protecting hiking trails that provide an outstanding experience of natural and undeveloped landscapes, a diminishing resource.
- 4) The state should require state agencies, counties and municipalities to address trails, sidewalks and bicycling accommodations as part of their master plans and other strategic planning documents through amendment of the Municipal Land Use Law. Trails can be incorporated as a component of circulation elements, transportation elements, open space, recreation, health, economic development, development requirements and/or tourism plans. Representatives of the health community and other non-traditional partners should be invited to participate in the planning process.

### Trail Planning and Development Resources and Technical Assistance

- 5) NJDEP should provide guidance to counties and municipalities regarding the preparation of trail plans to ensure that all trails planning documents address a standard set of issues, goals and priorities in support of the New Jersey Trails Plan; address all user groups; address both single use and multi-use facilities; address community pathways and opportunities for trail extension and connection.
- 6) NJDEP and partner agencies should initiate the development of criteria, guidelines and procedures for planning, designing and maintaining sustainable single and multiple use trails for all types of trails. The primary objectives are to establish trails that complement, not compromise,



environmental integrity and that address facility deficiencies identified through the statewide needs assessment (see Trails for All and Community Connections). These recommended guidelines and procedures would be a resource for all trail providers, including county and municipal governments. As much information already exists and is available from trail advocates and land managers, this initiative should be guided by a Steering Committee (or Special Task Force with oversight by the Trails Council) with representation from each type of user group, state, regional, county and municipal land managers, the environmental sciences, conservation interests, and other land use experts. The end products of this effort would be one or more handbooks for trails planning and development that may include:

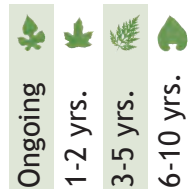
- Benefits of trails, New Jersey case studies and related documentation.
  - Universal Trail Rating System for trail providers and users.
  - County and Municipal Toolkit with trails planning, development and operating resources, such as sample ordinances, guide for working with developers, how-to-do a trail plan, funding sources, promotion, marketing trails, etc.
  - Coalition-building strategies to include non-traditional partners in trails planning and development (health and business community, for example).
  - NJ trails design guidance and a Best Practice Guide.
  - As a means of disseminating guidelines and priorities, this program might also include limited technical assistance to trail providers for specific trail plan and projects.
- 7) An Interagency Trails Council or task force should be convened to coordinate regulatory review of major trail projects early in the trail development process. The Task Force should also review policies and regulations to recommend changes that would improve and streamline trail permitting processes.
- 8) State, counties and municipalities should explore opportunities and incentives for the participation of land developers in supporting trails as part of the development process. The state should take a lead role in this initiative, exploring the potential for supporting legislation or other means to require consideration of trails and community pathways in developments, and encouraging municipalities to adopt ordinances and procedures accordingly.

### **New Jersey Trails System**

- 9) The New Jersey Trails System was authorized through legislation to establish a process for designating eligible trails and trail systems that meet standardized criteria. NJDEP should continue developing the New Jersey Trails System by:
- Revitalizing the State Trail System as a centerpiece of New Jersey's Trails Program. Formally define the role of the New Jersey Trails System in relation to the Trails Plan and Trails Program priorities. Update criteria and processes accordingly, incorporating benefits and incentives for designated trails.
  - Setting target goal for adding trails by 2010.
  - Identifying eligible trails to be part of the System and facilitating the preparation of the required management plans, streamlining the process of designation through the development of a prototype management plan. This effort could include the provision of technical assistance to complete the management plans.

# Summary of Recommendations

Recommended Time Frame for Initiating Action:



## 1 - TRAILS FOR ALL

### Needs Assessment:

- |  | Ongoing | 1-2 yrs. | 3-5 yrs. | 6-10 yrs. |
|--|---------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1) Conduct a Statewide Trail Needs Assessment continuing the work of the Plan through a general public survey to statistically validate priorities (Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups) |         |          |          |           |

### Trail Development Priorities:

- |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 2) Prioritize trail development to address facility supply deficiencies based on needs assessment (State, Counties, Municipalities)      |  |  |  |  |
| 3) Accelerate ROW acquisition and development of multiple use trails, especially on rail rights of way (State, Counties, Municipalities) |  |  |  |  |

### Expanding Trail Development Opportunities:

- |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 4) Identify opportunities to provide sustainable trail access on publicly preserved open space (Counties, Municipalities) |  |  |  |  |
| 5) Incorporate potential trails use into the Farmland Preservation Program (State)  |  |  |  |  |
| 6) Encourage private landowners to make land available for public use (Trails Organizations)                              |  |  |  |  |

### Facilities For All Trail Activities:

- |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 7) Increase trails accessible to the mobility and sensory impaired throughout New Jersey (State, Trails Council, Trails Organizations)                                   |  |  |  |  |
| 8) Collaborate to establish water trails facilities throughout New Jersey and raise awareness of water trail opportunities (State, Trails Council, Trails Organizations) |  |  |  |  |
| 9) Collaborate to establish OHV riding facilities, education programs and registration programs (State, Trails Council, Trails Organization)                             |  |  |  |  |

## 2 - COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

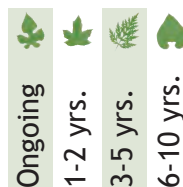
### Trail Development Priorities:

- |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 1) Complete key linkages to establish trails continuity (State, Counties Municipalities)  |  |  |  |  |
| 2) Acquire rights of way and provide trails that connect residential areas with community destinations – parks, trails, schools – and that connect neighborhoods and communities (Counties, Municipalities) |  |  |  |  |

### Expanding Trails Opportunities:

- |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 3) Establish state regulatory or legislative means to expedite establishing trails on unused rail rights-of-way and utility corridors (State) |  |  |  |  |
| 4) Encourage use of trails in the NJ Safe Routes to School Program (State)  |  |  |  |  |
| 5) Include trails in development, redevelopment and transit proposals (Municipalities, Builders and Developers, NJ Transit)                   |  |  |  |  |

## Recommended Time Frame for Initiating Action:



### 3 - TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

#### Trail Maintenance Policies, Priorities and Funding:

1) Prioritize and fund maintenance and enforcement programs continuity (State, Counties Municipalities)				
2) Provide “roving” trail crews and targeted funding for state trail maintenance (State Park Service)				
3) Prioritize improvements that enhance trail accessibility (State, Counties Municipalities)				

#### Trail Guidelines and Rating System:

4) Adopt/endorse maintenance guidelines and a Universal Rating System (challenge level) for trail providers and users (Consortium of Trails Groups)				
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#### Volunteer Programs:

5) Expand Volunteer Programs to assist in trail maintenance (State, Counties)				
6) Support the development of a statewide volunteer awards program (State, Counties, Municipalities)				






### 4 - FUNDING FOR TRAILS

#### State, County and Local Funding:

1) Increase the capacity of the State Trails Program with additional staff/staff support/resources (State)				
2) Fund trails planning and development; provide stable and dedicated funding for operations, maintenance and enforcement (State, Counties, Municipalities)				
3) Allocate funds and resources to expand the NJ Trails System; provide incentives in state-managed funding sources; fund management plans for eligible trails (State, Recreational Trails Program)				
4) Conduct a needs assessment and prepare a financial plan for trail facilities on state parks and forests (State Park Service)				
5) Provide funding incentives for multi-jurisdictional trails (State, Counties, Municipalities)				
6) Consider taxing authorities, bond initiatives and land development strategies to develop trails and community pathway networks (Municipalities)				


#### Maximize Trails Funding Sources:

7) Update Recreational Trails Funding Guidelines to support Trails Plan goals (State, Trails Council)				
8) Increase the share of Transportation Enhancements funding for trails development (State)				
9) Reestablish NJDOT funding program for pedestrian facilities and continue funding program for bicycle facilities (State)				
10) Ensure that trails are eligible for funding through corporate business taxes approved for recreation facility development				


	Recommended Time Frame for Initiating Action:			
	Ongoing	1-2 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	6-10 yrs.
<b>Diversify Funding Sources:</b>				
11) Include trails as an earmarked funding category under funding programs, such as Green Acres, Farmland Preservation Program, etc. (State)				
12) Apply funds from the (proposed) OHV registration towards OHV trails and parks, guided by an OHV Task Force (State)				
13) Explore non-traditional strategies for private, corporate and non-profit participation in trails (Consortium of Trails Groups)				
<b>Document Existing and Potential Funding Sources:</b>				
14) Develop a NJ Trails Funding Plan that identifies all available and prospective funding sources (State, Trails Council)				
15) Develop a comprehensive trails funding guide with emphasis on non-traditional sources and strategies (State, Trails Council)				

## 5 -TRAIL ADVOCATES AND THE TRAIL EXPERIENCE


### State or Regional Conference/Workshops:

1) Hold periodic trails conferences (Trails Council)				
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### Statewide Trail User Education:

2) Establish a Task Force for Trail Education to address the needs of trail users and promote trail use etiquette; conduct a statewide media campaign (Trails Council)				
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### Statewide Trails Volunteer Program:

3) Establish a statewide volunteer training and recognition program that can be replicated at regional, county and municipal levels (State, Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)				
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### Specialty Technical Assistance:

4) Establish a public/private partnership program to engage trails organizations in providing technical assistance to state, county and municipal land managers (State, Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)				
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## 6 -TRAIL INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION













### Statewide Trails Inventory:

1) Conduct a comprehensive inventory of trails (Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)				
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### Trails Research and Studies:

2) Conduct NJ-specific trails-related research and studies through partnerships among state agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations (State, Trail Organizations, Educational Institutions)				
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Recommended Time Frame for Initiating Action:		Ongoing	1-2 yrs.	3-5 yrs.	6-10 yrs.
<b>Trails Clearinghouse:</b>					
3)	Develop a Web-based clearinghouse of trails information for trail users and providers; develop tools and resources for publication (Trail Organizations, Educational Institutions)				
<b>Trails Promotion:</b>					
4)	Develop statewide map(s) of major trails representing all user groups (Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)				
5)	Establish a formal alliance of trail groups to lead a Statewide Promotion Campaign; hold a statewide trails event annually (Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)				
6)	Develop or expand programs to increase awareness of community pathways within cities and towns (State, Counties, Municipalities)				
7)	Trail promotion should emphasize public health benefits; partnership between the public health and trails community should be encouraged from state to local levels (State, Trails Council, Trails Organizations)				
<b>7 - TRAILS PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT</b>					
<b>Trails Planning:</b>					
1)	NJDEP should be the steward, monitor, and prime implementer of the NJ Trails Plan, updating the Plan periodically (State)				
2)	Include trails in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) (State)				
3)	Provide both single use and multi-use trails in state parks and forests based on environmental conditions and needs assessment, with an emphasis on establishing and protecting “wilderness” hiking trails on undeveloped lands (State)				
4)	Amend the Municipal Land Use Law to require trails to be included in municipal master plans (State); include trails in master plans and strategic planning documents (State, Regional Agencies, Counties, Municipalities)				
5)	Establish guidelines for county and municipal trails planning documents to promote consistency with NJ Trails Plan objectives (State, Trails Program)				
6)	Develop a NJ specific resource guide with procedures for planning and developing trails (State, Trails Council, Consortium of Trails Groups)				
7)	Establish an Interagency Trails Council to coordinate regulatory review of trail policies and to advise the legislature (State, Trails Council)				
8)	Explore legislative opportunities and incentive programs for land developers to support trails as part of the development process (State, Counties, Municipalities)				
<b>New Jersey Trails System:</b>					
9)	Revitalize the State Trails System as the centerpiece of the New Jersey Trails Program; increase the number of designated trails (State)				

# NJ Trails Plan

## 6. Implementing The Plan

### Roles and Responsibilities

The 2008 Trails Plan is a Vision Plan, comprehensive in scope. The Plan identifies and examines a broad range of needs, desires, topics, issues and ideas that affect trails development and operations from the standpoint of both trail users and trail providers. The Plan reflects extensive input derived from surveys, workshops, focus groups, interviews and the participation of a Plan Advisory Committee representing a broad base of stakeholder organizations. It evaluates potential solutions and proposes a series of strategic and long-term actions required to achieve the goals and fulfill the vision of the Plan. Many players and partners were involved in the quest to understand current conditions, trends, needs and opportunities and in generating a vision, goals and potential solutions. Many have a role to play in implementing or supporting the implementation of actions required to implement the Plan.

The previous section of the Plan specified a number of strategic and long-range actions to be undertaken. In most cases the entity to carry out the actions was specified or implied. This section further examines and identifies entities and the roles and responsibilities that they need to take on. The level of involvement by each participant varies. Some play a lead role since they are involved in program activities that directly fund, implement and operate trails. Other parties are involved less directly and play a supporting role. Setting out roles and responsibilities in this manner runs the risk of leaving the impression that implementation of the Plan is largely a governmental, “top down” exercise. In fact, achieving goals and fulfilling the various vision themes will require involvement from volunteers, advocacy groups and non-profits working collaboratively.

### New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

The New Jersey Department of Environment Protection has a primary role in implementing the Plan. It is home to the Division of Parks and Forestry which is directly responsible for

administering 42 state parks, 11 state forests, 3 recreation areas and more than 50 historic sites and districts. These facilities include many of the longer trails and trails systems in the state. The Division includes the Office of Natural Lands Management (ONLM) which is directly responsible for the Trails Program. This includes the administration of the Recreational Trails Program grant funds program and the designation of trails to the State Trails System under N.J.A.C. 7:5D.

NJDEP is also home to the Division of Fish and Wildlife, which manages over 310,000 acres in 121 Wildlife Management areas, which represents more than 44% of New Jersey's state-owned public open space. By far the most popular activity on these lands is not hunting or fishing, but what is referred to as wildlife-oriented recreational activities (wildlife observation, photography, etc.).

Another NJDEP function is the Green Acres Program that administers funding programs, including the Garden State Preservation Trust and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, to acquire open space and develop outdoor recreation facilities such as trails. Its programs include State Land Acquisition, which acquires lands for State Parks and Forests and Wildlife Management Areas, and the Local Assistance Program, which provides grants and low interest loans (2%) to municipal and county governments and matching grants to non-profit organizations for open space acquisition and park development projects. Their Planning Incentive Program, provides matching grant funding for land preservation projects to local governments that have enacted an open space tax and have adopted an open space and recreation plan. The goal of these programs is to achieve, in partnership with others, a system of interconnected open spaces, whose protection will preserve and enhance New Jersey's natural environment and its historic, scenic, and recreational resources for public use and enjoyment.

### **New Jersey Department of Transportation**

The New Jersey Department of Transportation provides strategic direction for transportation planning in New Jersey. The Department has established policies to support bicycle and pedestrian travel. The Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs leads the Department's efforts to implement these policies. It administers technical assistance programs to support planning and project development activities for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, including trails (including funding for the development of this Trails Plan. The Department's Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator is a member of the Trails Council. The Division of Local Aid and Economic Development administers both federal (TE and SRTS) and state programs that fund bicycle and pedestrian facilities including trails (where they perform a transportation function).

### **New Jersey Trails Council**

The New Jersey Trails Council is a lay advisory board to the NJDEP and NJDOT, which, in addition to supporting and participating in this Plan update, assists in the selection of Recreational Trails Program grant recipients. ONLM provides staff assistance to the Trails Council. It is anticipated that ONLM and the Trails Council will be in the vanguard of those implementing the Plan. This includes playing a significant role in rolling out the plan to the public and implementation of this Trails Plan.

### **Counties and Municipalities**

All save one of New Jersey's counties include a unit of government responsible for developing and operating county-owned recreation lands. Most counties include trails on their recreation lands or as "stand alone" facilities. Many municipalities also develop and maintain parks facilities that include trails or

trail systems. County and municipal transportation agencies are responsible for the development and upkeep of transportation systems that include accommodations for pedestrian and bicycle travel. County and municipal Master Plans offer the opportunity to integrate trails into the transportation, recreation and open space plans of the community and coordinate the development of facilities with adjacent communities and other levels of government. Municipalities control land use decision through local zoning and subdivision regulations.

### **Trails User Groups/Advocates/Interest Groups**

A wide range of private and non-profit organizations have an interest in trails. These include trail user groups, advocacy organizations, land trusts, and recreation and open space organizations. What they have in common is their desire to serve the interests and needs of their members and/or influence policy and governmental decision making that can affect the future of trails. Their concerted efforts can be a powerful influence.

### **Office of the Governor, Legislature**

With executive powers, the Governor sets policy and provides leadership. The Office of the Governor can highlight the importance of trails and direct the Departments of the executive branch to undertake actions recommended in this Plan. Ideally, the Governor's Office would be a champion for trails in New Jersey. With its funding authority, the Legislature has the power to insure that legislation is passed that supports trails and provides adequate funding. Members of the Legislature can also serve as champions for the implementation of the Plan.

### **Division of Travel and Tourism in the Department of State**

New Jersey Travel and Tourism is the appropriate agency to market and promote interest in trails and trail use by providing information about trails opportunities throughout the State via the Travel and Tourism website and various publications.

### **Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)**

The three MPOs in New Jersey: North Jersey Transportation Planning Association (NJTPA); South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO); and, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) can support trails by including trails-related projects with transportation benefits on regional and state Transportation Improvement Programs. MPO's can also fund studies on trails through their technical studies programs.

### **New Jersey Meadowlands and Pinelands Commissions, NJ Highlands Council**

With their mandates to plan for and manage lands with special environmental sensitivities, the Pinelands, Meadowlands and Highlands Commissions have the opportunity to support the development and use of trails as a means of recreation and as a tool for education by enabling the public to visit and understand the value of these special places.

### **Land Trusts and Foundations**

Land trusts (conservancies, foundations, or associations) are local, regional, statewide or national nonprofit organizations that are established to protect land and its resources. Their main purpose is to protect lands that have natural, recreational, scenic, historic, or productive values. There are over two dozen land trusts operating in New Jersey.

## **Department of Health and Senior Services**

The Department of Health and Senior Services has many programs that promote healthy and active lifestyles.

## **Office of Smart Growth**

The Office of Smart Growth in the Department of Community Affairs coordinates planning throughout the state to protect the environment and guide growth and development. It is in charge of implementing the goals of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The Office awards Smart Growth Grants and administers the State's Transfer of Development Rights program.

## **Department of Agriculture**

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture is home to the State's farmland preservation program, which has the potential to provide opportunities for new trails rights of way.

## **Individuals (trail users)**

Individual trail users are responsible for advocating for trails they prefer and informing policy makers and trail providers of their interests and desires.

## **Private Sector**

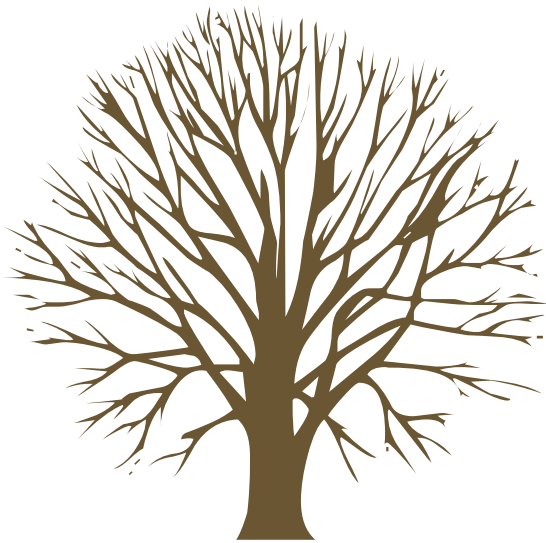
Private entities can donate land or easements to their land for trails. Developers can incorporate trails into their site plans or provide trails as off-site improvements.

The following Matrix lists agencies and organizations that play principal and supporting roles in implementing facets of the Plan.

## **Strategic Priorities**

If all of the recommendations included in the Action Plan were to be advanced, New Jersey would assuredly be able, in the long run, to fulfill its Vision for Trails. As the Plan has made clear, resources are not currently available to do all these things, certainly not at once. The challenge, then, is to identify a set of key actions that must be initiated and be well on their way to completion within the strategic time frame. Otherwise the chances of substantially improving trails and trail opportunities in New Jersey will be diminished. A coordinated effort by a wide range of lead and supporting organizations should be initiated as soon and as vigorously as possible and advanced to appropriate milestones within the next 3 to 5 years:





Leadership  
Policy  
Legislation, regulation  
Research, surveys, needs assessments, data collection  
Trails Transportation/ Recreation Planning  
Trails marketing, promotion, advocacy  
Trail development, design, land acquisition, construction  
Information dissemination, user Information  
Funding  
User education, volunteer programs  
Technical assistance, training  
Operations, maintenance, enforcement

## PRINCIPAL ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governor, Legislature	•	•	•					•		
NJDEP	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Parks and Forestry/Office of Natural Lands Mgt.				•	•		•		•	•
Green Acres				•				•		
Fish and Wildlife							•			•
Trails Council	•	•		•		•		•	•	
NJDOT	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Counties	•	•			•	•	•	•		•
Municipalities	•	•			•	•	•	•		•
Trails (User Groups) Organizations	•				•		•		•	•

## SUPPORTING ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Department of Commerce Travel and Tourism					•		•			
MPOs	•	•						•		
Commissions										
Meadowlands	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•
Pinelands	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•
Highlands	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•
Foundations, Land Trusts	•	•		•		•				
Department of Community Affairs-Office of Smart Growth	•	•			•	•		•		
Department of Agriculture	•	•								
Individuals (trail users)					•					
Department of Health and Human Services	•				•					
Builders & Developers						•		•		
NJ Transit	•									





# NJ Trails Plan

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Summary of Public Comments

The draft Trails Plan Update was posted on the Project Website for public comment from June 1 to June 30, 2008. Notification of the opportunity to review and comment was sent to approximately 700 people who had submitted contact information on the Website. The Trails Council and the Trails Plan Advisory Committee also distributed information through their trails-community networks.

In general, the comments reflected enthusiasm and support for the Trails Plan Update. There were also requests for clarifications and some minor corrections, which were incorporated into the final version.

The list below summarizes the comments received by topic:

#### Trail Priorities & Recommendations

- Need to prioritize the protection, expansion and promotion of New Jersey's long distance trails.
- Prioritize community walking paths as part of trails networks; improve pedestrian access through roadway improvement projects.
- Incorporate the potential for trails use into the State Farmland Preservation Program as a short-term action to facilitate linking trails across rural areas.
- There is an immediate need for an inventory and mapping of major trails.

- Include trails and pedestrian facilities in development, redevelopment and transit proposals.
- Prioritize bicycle trails connecting housing to mass transit.
- Prioritize funding to municipalities for mandatory planning to incorporate bicycle trails part of the transportation infrastructure.

### **Dedicated Trail Facilities**

- Support for and protection of trails dedicated to hiking; need for expansion of hiking-only trails.
- Need for encouraging mountain biking advocates to identify and create dedicated mountain-biking trails.
- Need for incentives to engage ATV advocates and other Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) users in identifying and acquiring dedicated riding facilities.

### **Emerging Trail Uses**

- Recognition of trail running as a fast growing sport.

### **Trails For Transportation**

- Emphasis on trails as transportation alternatives that can help New Jersey reduce fossil fuel use and can help New Jersey achieve goals to reduce climate-warming.

### **Motorized Use Enforcement & Policy**

- Need for stronger enforcement of illegal motorized use.
- Support for prohibiting OHV/ ATV use on state, county and municipal parkland.

### **State Trails System**

- Need for clarification of process for designating trails for inclusion in the State Trails System.

### **Past Trails Plans**

- Need for clarification on status of implementation of earlier trails plans.

### **Plan Implementation**

- Inquiries about ways to become involved in Plan Implementation.
- Need for detailed strategies on how Plan will be implemented and by what organizations.

## Appendix 2: Key Resources

The resources referenced during the planning process were extensive and varied. Many individuals and organizations participated in the outreach activities, providing plans, maps and other documents for review. Publications, plans, reports and articles were also gathered from both government and non-profit organizations. The list below represents a sampling of resources used in the development of the Plan.

### ORGANIZATIONS

#### Governmental

- Brendan T. Byrne State Forest
- Burlington County Division of Parks
- Kittatinny Valley State Park
- Monmouth County Park System
- Morris County Parks Commission
- Morris Township Parks and Recreation
- New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, New Jersey Office of Recreation
- New Jersey Department of Transportation, Office of Bicycle & Pedestrian Programs
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Natural & Historic Resources
- Township of Randolph

#### Non-Profit/Other

- American Canoe Association/Mohawk Canoe Club
- D&R Greenway Land Trust
- Isles, Inc.
- Jersey Off-Road Bicycle Association
- New Jersey Conservation Foundation
- New Jersey Off-Highway Vehicle Association
- New Jersey Trail Ride Association
- New York - New Jersey Trail Conference
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

### STATE AND COUNTY PLANS AND PUBLICATIONS

NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry, Office of Natural Lands Management. “*New Jersey Trails Plan Summary*.” January 1996.

NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program “*New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2003-2007*.”

NJ Department of Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program. “*Nonprofit Assistance Application Land Acquisition and Park Development*.” January 2006.



Atlantic County Department of Regional Planning and Economic Development. "*Bicycle Element for the Atlantic County Master Plan.*" January 1995; revised September 2000.

Burlington County Department of Resource Conservation. "*Parks and Open Space Master Plan.*" August 2002.

Contra Costa County Department of Public Works and Community Development. "*Trail Design Resource Handbook.*" March 2001.

Hunterdon County Planning Board. "*County Road Bicycle Facility Assessment.*" August 1997.

Hunterdon County Planning Board. "*Hunterdon County Bicycle and Pedestrian Element.*" July 2001.

Middlesex County Planning Board. "*Open Space and Recreation Plan.*" February 2003.

Middlesex County Planning Department. "*Middlesex County Bicycle Pedestrian Plan.*" November 2001.

Monmouth County Park System. "*Monmouth County Park System Trails Program.*" January 1992; Revised February 1997 and April 2005.

## REPORTS

American Trails. "*National Recreation Trails Program.*" July 2006.

Appalachian Mountain Club. "*AMC Outdoors.*" March 2006.

Delaware River Greenway Partnership. "*Delaware River Heritage Trail Handbook: Guide to Trail Management.*" 2004.

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). "*Recreational Open Space Needs Analysis for the Delaware Valley.*" May 2002.

East Coast Greenway. "*State of the Trail Report.*" 2001

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). "*Characteristics of Emerging Road and Trail Users and Their Safety.*" October 2004.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). "*Conflicts on Multiple-Use Trails: Synthesis of the Literature and State of the Practice.*"

Johnson, Lindsay. "*Case Studies of Water Trail Impacts on Rural Communities.*" September 2002.

O'Dell, Anne M. "*Designing Shared Use Trails to Include Equestrians.*" 2003.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. “*Rails-with-Trails: A Preliminary Assessment of Safety and Grade Crossings.*” November 2005.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. “*Trails & Greenways: Advancing the Smart Growth Agenda.*” September 2002.

United States Access Board. “*Regulatory Negotiation Committee on Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas.*” September 30, 1999.

United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. “*National Management Strategy for Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Public Lands.*” January 2001.

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. “*Trails of the Mid-Atlantic Region: Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia.*”

USDA Forest Service – Northeastern Area. “*A Guide: Completing an Inventory of Urban Park Trails.*”

## WEB SITES

ABC of Hiking. <http://www.abc-of-hiking.com>  
American Hiking Society. <http://www.americanhiking.org>  
American Trails. <http://americantrails.org>  
Appalachian Mountain Club. <http://www.outdoors.org>  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy. <http://www.appalachiantrail.org>  
Backpacker. <http://www.thebackpacker.com>  
Disabled Equestrians Organization. <http://www.disabledequestrians.org>  
Equestrian Land Conservation Resource. <http://www.elcr.org>  
Equestrian Trails, Inc. <http://etinternational.com>  
Garden State Greenways. <http://www.gardenstategreenways.org>  
National Trails Training Partnership. <http://www.nttp.net>  
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. <http://www.nynjtc.org>  
NJ Trails Association. <http://www.njtrails.org>  
Outdoor Recreation in America. <http://www.funoutdoors.com>  
Professional Trailbuilders Association. <http://www.trailbuilders.org>  
Rails to Trails Conservancy. <http://www.railtrails.org>  
Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference. <http://www.southeasternequestriantrails.com>  
The Mountaineers. <http://www.mountaineers.org>  
Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse. <http://www.trailsandgreenways.org>  
United States Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov>  
United States National Park Service. <http://home.nps.gov>  
NJ Futures. <http://www.njfuture.org>

## Appendix 3: State Agency Mission Statements

### NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

#### **Vision:**

The Department of Environmental Protection is committed to providing a high quality of life for the residents of New Jersey.

#### **Mission:**

To assist the residents of New Jersey in preserving, sustaining, protecting and enhancing the environment to ensure the integration of high environmental quality, public health and economic vitality.

We will accomplish our mission in partnership with the general public, business, environmental communities and all levels of government by:

- Developing and integrating an environmental master plan to assist the Department and our partners in decision-making through increased availability of resource data on the Geographic Information System.
- Defining and publishing reasonable, clear and predictable scientifically based on standards.
- Achieving the Department's goals in a manner that encourages compliance and innovation.
- Employing a decision-making process that is open, comprehensive, timely, predictable and efficient.
- Providing residents and visitors with affordable access to safe and clean open space, historic and natural resources.
- Assuring that pollution is prevented in the most efficient and practical way possible.
- Assuring that the best technology is planned and applied to achieve long-term goals.
- Assuring that non-treatable wastes are isolated managed and controlled.
- Enhancing environmental awareness and stewardship through education and communication.
- Fostering a work environment that attracts and retains dedicated and talented people.
- Committing to an ongoing evaluation of the Department's progress toward achieving our mission.

## NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### **Vision:**

New Jersey's Citizens enjoy an enviable quality of life, with greater choice, access and opportunity. The state is widely heralded as a leader in forging successful community and economic development patterns. These patterns, combined with an advantageous location, have made New Jersey a leading competitor in the global economic market. New Jersey's strong economy provides jobs for the labor force's many segments. The state's diverse service sector includes goods movement, tourism and research. The state's manufacturing sector includes advanced clean energy- and resource-efficient technologies, as well as innovative low-tech operations. The state's centerpiece of investment is based on fostering livable communities of every size and scale where people choose to live. Development and redevelopment patterns follow a more compact form promoted in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and supported by the transportation policies of Transportation Choices 2025.

### **Mission:**

Improving lives by improving transportation.

## Appendix 4: The Trails Council and The State Trails System

Excerpts from Legislation, Administrative Orders and Rules follow:

- “New Jersey Trails System Act” - Chapter 159; P.L. 1974 – Establishes the State Trails System
- Chapter 367; Laws of 1975 – Establishes the Trails Council and authorizes to prepare a Plan for a State Trails System
- Administrative Order No. 19 (October 23, 1992) – Officially Reforms the Trails Council and establishes its functions
- Chapter 5D – State Trails System Rules – Effective September 8, 2005 – Rules for Implementing the New Jersey Trails System Act; identifies the Trails that are included in the New Jersey Trails System and describes Trail Designation Qualifications, Criteria and Procedures



**Chapter 159**  
**P.L. 1974**  
**STATE TRAILS SYSTEM**

**13:8-30. Short title**

This act shall be known and may be cited as the “New Jersey Trails System Act.”

**13:8-31. Legislative findings and declaration**

- a. The Legislature hereby finds that in order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population, and in order to promote public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoor, natural and remote areas of this State trails should be established both in natural and scenic areas of New Jersey, and in and near the urban areas of this State.
- b. The Legislature, therefore, declares that it is the policy of this State to provide the means for attaining these objectives by instituting a Statewide system of recreation and scenic trails, by designating the Appalachian trail as the initial component of that system, and by prescribing the methods by which, and standards according to which, additional components may be added to the system.

**13:8-32. Definitions**

As used in this act, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

- a. “Department” means the Department of Environmental Protection.
- b. “Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Environmental Protection.
- c. “Scenic easement” means a perpetual easement in land which (1) is held for the benefit of the public (2) is specifically enforceable by its holder or beneficiary, and (3) limits or obligates the holder of the servient estate, his heirs, and assigns with respect to their use and management of activities conducted thereon, the object of such limitations and obligations being the maintenance or enhancement of the natural beauty of the land in question or of areas affected by it.
- d. “Scenic trail” means an extended trail so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the significant scenic, historic, natural or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass.

**13:8-33. Classes of trails**

The State trails system shall be composed of the following classes of trails:

- a. State scenic trails, which will be extended trails so located as to provide maximum potential for the appreciation of natural areas and for the conservation and enjoyment of the significant scenic, historic, natural, ecological, geological, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass. Each of these trails will be limited exclusively to foot use, except that use by horses

or nonmotorized bicycles may also be permitted on segments of scenic trails where deemed appropriate by the department.

- b. State recreation trails, which will provide a variety of outdoor recreation uses in or reasonably accessible to urban areas.
- c. Connecting or side trails, which will provide additional points of public access to State scenic or recreation trails or which will provide connections between such trails. They shall be of the nature of the trails they serve.

**13:8-34. Establishment of system; uniform markers; coordination with national trail system**

- a. The department is hereby authorized, empowered, and directed to establish a State trails system of recreation trails, scenic trails and connecting or side trails in the State composed of (1) the Appalachian trail, and (2) such other trails that are established or designated from time to time by the department under the provisions of this act.
- b. The department, in consultation with appropriate Federal, State, and local governmental agencies and public and private organizations, shall establish a uniform marker for the trails system, and shall coordinate the trails system with the National trails system established under applicable provisions of Federal law.

**13:8-35. Establishment and designation; recreation and scenic trails; Appalachian Trail; connecting or side trails**

- a. The department may establish and designate recreation and scenic trails over lands administered by it.
- b. There is hereby established as the initial scenic trail the Appalachian trail, which shall be administered primarily as footpath by the department, provided however, that nothing herein contained shall be construed as amending, repealing or superseding the provisions of P.L. 1973, c. 54 (C. 13:8-29), except as specifically provided herein.
- c. Connecting or side trails within park, forest, and other recreation areas or natural areas may be established, designated and marked as components of a recreation or scenic trail.

**13:8-36. Selection of routes and rights-of-way; criteria**

- a. The selected route shall be compatible with the preservation or enhancement of the environment it traverses, and the boundaries of the right-of-way shall be established in such a manner that they protect the scenic values of the trail.
- b. In selecting rights-of-way, the department shall give full consideration to minimizing the adverse effects upon the adjacent landowner or user and his operation. Development and management of each segment of the trails system shall be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple-use plans for that specific area in order to insure continued maximum benefits from the land.

### **13:8-37. Use of state lands, acquisition of lands or interests in land**

The department may use for trail purposes lands owned by the State, with the concurrence of the head of the administering agency, and may acquire lands or interests in land by scenic easements, written cooperative agreement, eminent domain, donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange. Acquisition of land or interest shall be accomplished with all possible speed.

### **13:8-38. Noninterference with nature and purposes by use of trail; maintenance of natural and scenic qualities**

Within the external boundaries of the right-of-way, the natural vegetation shall be kept undisturbed except for any clearing required for construction of the trail, occasional vistas, or trail-use facilities. The department shall make every effort to avoid any use of the right-of-way that is incompatible with the purposes for which the trails system shall be designed to harmonize with and complement any established multiple use plans for that specific area in order to insure continual maximum benefits from the land. Other uses along the trail, which will not substantially interfere with the nature and purposes of the trail, may be permitted by the department.

State scenic trails shall be managed in such a way as to maintain their natural and scenic quality.

### **13:8-39. Development and maintenance of trails; written cooperative agreements**

- a. The department shall provide for the development and maintenance of trails established under this act and shall cooperate with and encourage other State agencies to operate, develop and maintain portions of such trails, which are located in areas administered, by such agencies.
- b. When deemed to be in the public interest, the department may enter into written cooperative agreements with local governments, landowners, private organizations or individuals to operate, develop and maintain any portion of a recreation or scenic trail.

### **13:8-40. Studies of designation of additional trails**

The department shall make studies for the purpose of determining the feasibility and desirability of designating additional trails as recreation or scenic trails.

### **13:8-41. Review of formal declarations of railroad right-of-way abandonments for inclusion in system**

The department shall review all formal declarations of railroad right-of-way abandonments by the Interstate Commerce Commission or other Federal agencies, for possible inclusion into the State trail system.

### **13:8-42. Rules and regulation**

The commissioner may adopt and promulgate pursuant to law, rules and regulations governing the use, protection, management, development and administration of the trails system and such other rules and regulations as he deems necessary to effectuate the purposes of this act.

### **13:8-43. Violations; penalties**

Any person violating any provision of this act or any rule or regulation promulgated there under shall

be liable to a penalty of not more than \$50.00 to be collected in a summary proceeding pursuant to the Penalty Enforcement Law (N.J.S.A. 2A:58-1 et seq.)

**13:8-44. Funds available for acquisition of lands or interests therein**

The commissioner may use any sum hereafter appropriated by any act from the proceeds of the sale of bonds under the New Jersey Green Acres Land Acquisition Act of 1971, c. 419 (C. 13:8A-19 et seq.), and such other sums as may be appropriated for like purposes for the acquisition of lands or interests therein for the purpose of this act.

Chapter 367  
LAWS OF 1975  
NEW JERSEY TRAILS COUNCIL

An Act authorizing the New Jersey Trails Council created by the Department of Environmental Protection to undertake a study and prepare a plan for a coordinated system of trails throughout the State of New Jersey.

Be it enacted by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. The New Jersey Trails Council is hereby authorized, in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Protection, to undertake a study and devise a plan for a coordinated system of trails throughout the State of New Jersey.
2. It shall be the duty of the New Jersey Trails Council to serve as a lay advisory board to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation in coordinating the activities of the study and plan to be undertaken.

The Council shall:

- a. Be ever cognizant of the environment and shall strive to have such a system of trails planned and developed in such a way so that, the local environments will not be harmed but rather enhanced by the proposed system of trails; and
  - b. Endeavor to encourage cooperation between various governmental agencies at the Federal, State, County and municipal levels so that, the proposed trails system may be a reality and properly coordinated to realize the intent for a system of trails.
3. The council shall be entitled to call to its assistance and retain consultants in various disciplines to study the desirability and feasibility of establishing a system of trails in the State of New Jersey, including the location as well as the type of trails, and give consideration to all types of trails that may be utilized throughout the State for recreational, as well as transportation activities.
  4. The New Jersey Trails Council shall report its findings and recommendations to the Commissioner of Environmental Protection one year from the effective date of this act.

This act shall take effect immediately.



## ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 19

Whereas, the New Jersey Trails Council was established by P.L. 1975, Chapter 367, to act as a lay advisory board to the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation in coordinating the development of a plan for a system of trails throughout the State; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy is currently revising the State Trails Plan adopted in 1982 and requires the guidance of such a council in the development and implementation of the revised State Trails Plan;

I, Scott A. Weiner, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy, pursuant to the authority of N.J.S.A. 13:8-30 et seq. and P.L. 1975, Chapter 367, do hereby order and direct the reformation of the New Jersey Trails Council which shall continue to serve as an advisory board in the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy in the development and implementation of a State Trails System (N.J.S.A. 13:8-30 et. seq.). The New Jersey Trails Council (Council) shall perform its duties in accordance with this administrative order.

The functions of the Council shall include the following:

1. To encourage the cooperation among government agencies at the Federal, State, county and municipal levels and provides recommendations to the Department on the development of the State Trails Plan.
2. To provide a forum for the public to discuss issues related to the State Trails System and the State Trails Plan.
3. To evaluate land owned by the Department and recommend to the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy the designation, development and maintenance of scenic, recreation and connecting trails to the State Trails System.
4. To evaluate all potential state government offerings proposed for trail development and provide recommendations for the Department.
5. To periodically revise the State Trails Plan and recommend additions, deletions and modifications.

The Council shall be composed of eleven (11) members representing trail user groups, interest groups (those representing a broad range of interests as opposed to trail user group representatives who represent and promote specific trail uses) and State government agencies. Members of the Council representing trail user groups and interest groups shall be appointed by the Commissioner of the Department and shall serve for a period of three (3) years from the date of their appointment and until their successors are duly appointed. Members of the Council representing State government agencies shall serve at the appointment by the commissioner of the respective agency.

Five (5) members of the Council shall represent trail user groups, which may include but not be limited to hiking, canoe, bicycle, and horse, snowmobile and ski touring organizations.

Three (3) members of the Council shall consist of state government representatives, one representative from the Department of Transportation, appointed by the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, and two representatives from the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy one of whom shall be from either the Division of Parks and Forestry or the Office of Green Acres, to be appointed by the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection and Energy.

This Order shall take effect immediately.

October 23, 1992

Scott A. Weiner, Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and Energy

## Chapter 5D

# STATE TRAILS SYSTEM RULES, EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 8, 2005

### SUBCHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

#### 7:5D-1.1 Purpose and scope

This chapter constitutes the rules of the Department concerning the implementation of the New Jersey Trails System Act, N.J.S.A. 13:8-30 et seq. This chapter establishes standards, procedures and practices for designating and maintaining trails as part of the State Trails System, in order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and to promote public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoor, natural and remote areas of the State. Designation of trails to the System is intended to help preserve the natural, recreational, ecological, geological, historic and cultural qualities of trails and the areas through which they pass; to increase open space and recreational opportunities; and to enhance the quality of life in New Jersey for all State residents and visitors.

#### 7:5D-1.2 Construction

This chapter shall be liberally construed to permit the Department to effectuate the purposes of the New Jersey Trails System Act, N.J.S.A. 13:8-30 et seq.

#### 7:5D-1.3 Severability

If any subchapter, section, subsection, provision, clause or portion of this chapter, or the application thereof to any person, is adjudged unconstitutional or invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such judgement shall be confined in its operation to the subchapter, section, subsection, provision, clause, portion or application directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment is rendered and shall not affect or impair the validity of the remainder of this chapter or the application thereof to other persons.

#### 7:5D-1.4 Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Act” means the New Jersey Trails System Act, N.J.S.A. 13:8-30 et seq.

“ADA” means the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.

“Administering agency” means (1) any agency of the Department that is assigned responsibility for managing a particular parcel of land, or (2) any Federal agency, State department, local unit or charitable conservancy that establishes a land management policy for a particular parcel of land included in a designated State trail.

“Charitable conservancy” means a corporation or trust whose purposes include the acquisition and preservation of land or water areas, or of a particular land or water area, or either thereof, in a natural, scenic or open condition, no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual, and which has received tax exemption under section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

“Commissioner” means the Commissioner of the Department or his or her designated representative.

“Conservation restriction” means an interest in land less than fee simple absolute, stated in the form of a right, restriction, easement, covenant, or condition, in any deed, will or other instrument, other than a lease, executed by or on behalf of the owner of the land, appropriate to retaining land or water areas predominantly in their natural, scenic or open or wooded condition, or for conservation of soil or wildlife, or for outdoor recreation or park use, or as suitable habitat for fish or wildlife, executed for the purposes listed at N.J.S.A. 13:8B-2(b).

“Council” means the New Jersey Trails Council.

“Department” means the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, its successors and assigns.

“Division” means the Division of Parks and Forestry in the Department.

“Local unit” means a municipality, county or other political subdivision of the State or agency thereof.

“New Jersey Trails Council” means the advisory board established by the Department and authorized by P.L. 1975 c.367, to undertake a study and prepare a plan for a coordinated system of trails throughout the State, and continued by the Department for the purpose of providing public input into the administration of the State Trails System.

“Scenic easement” means a perpetual easement in land which (1) is held for the benefit of the public, (2) is specifically enforceable by its holder or beneficiary, and (3) limits or obligates the holder of the servient estate and his or her heirs and assigns with respect to their use and management of activities conducted thereon, the object of such limitations and obligations being the maintenance or enhancement of the natural beauty of the land in question or of areas affected by it.

“State Trails System” or “System” means the statewide system of individual trails or group of trails authorized by the Act and designated pursuant to this chapter.

“Trail facility” means any area, structure or equipment that functions to provide a service to the trail user, including, but not limited to, parking lots, picnic areas and rest rooms.

“Trail right-of-way” means a road, path, or water body and adjacent land, under the jurisdiction of an administering agency and designated for public trail access pursuant to this chapter.

“Trails Plan” means the plan for a coordinated system of trails throughout the State authorized by P. L. 1975, c.367, as updated.

## **SUBCHAPTER 2. NEW JERSEY TRAILS COUNCIL**

### **7:5D-2.1 New Jersey Trails Council**

- (a) The New Jersey Trails Council shall advise the Department on the designation of trails to the State Trails System and the management of the State Trails System.

(b) The Council shall consist of representatives from trail user groups, outdoor recreation and conservation organizations, and State governmental agencies. Members of the Council representing trail user groups and outdoor recreation and conservation organizations shall be appointed by the Commissioner and shall serve for a period of three years from the date of appointment and until their successors are duly appointed. Members of the Council representing State governmental agencies shall serve as ex-officio members, and shall be appointed by the Commissioner of their respective departments.

(c) The Council shall:

1. Provide a forum for the public to discuss issues related to the designation and management of the State Trails System or the contents of the Trails Plan;
2. Advise the Department on the establishment, development, and maintenance of scenic, recreation and connecting trails on lands owned by the Department;
3. Advise the Department on the trail development potential of proposed State acquisitions;
4. Review proposals for trail designation submitted by Federal or State agencies, local units, private organizations or persons and advise the Department on such proposals;
5. Periodically evaluate the Trails Plan and advise the Department on additions, deletions, and modifications;
6. Review trail proposals and funding allocations consistent with any Federal requirements for trail acquisition and management, and advise the Department on the results of its review; and
7. Encourage the development of trails throughout the State and provide information to the State and the public on trails issues of Statewide interest.

### **SUBCHAPTER 3. LAND ACQUISITION FOR TRAILS**

#### **7:5D-3.1 Land acquisition for trails**

- (a) The Department, with the advice of the Council, may acquire interest in land for trails purposes in fee simple, or by conservation restriction or scenic easement, through purchase, donation or exchange.
- (b) The Department shall review for trails acquisition potential all formal declarations of railroad right-of-way abandonments by the Interstate Commerce Commission or other Federal agencies.

### **SUBCHAPTER 4. CLASSES OF TRAILS**

#### **7:5D-4.1 Classes of trails**

(a) The State Trails System is composed of the following classes of trails:

1. Scenic trails;



2. Recreation trails; and
3. Connecting trails.

#### **7:5D-4.2 Scenic trails**

- (a) Scenic trails are designated to the State Trails System to provide the public with the opportunity for the appreciation of natural and cultural areas, and to facilitate the conservation and enjoyment of significant scenic, historic, natural, ecological, geological or cultural areas through which such trails pass.
- (b) Scenic trails shall be designated for a single nonmotorized trail use. The Department shall specify the uses of scenic trails upon their designation to the State Trails System. The Department may allow segments of scenic trails to be used for additional nonmotorized uses such as hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, cross-country skiing and/or snowshoeing, as appropriate.
- (c) Scenic trails must be five miles or longer in length, but a scenic trail may consist of segments or components of a group of trails totaling five miles or more.

#### **7:5D-4.3 Recreation trails**

- (a) Recreation trails are designated to the State Trails System to provide the public with the opportunity for a variety of outdoor recreational uses.
- (b) The Department shall specify the uses of recreational trails upon their designation to the State Trails System. Such uses may include hiking, canoeing, kayaking, horseback riding, carriage driving, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, motorcycling, use of off-road vehicles (ORVs), or cultural, educational or historical touring.

#### **7:5D-4.4 Connecting trails**

Connecting trails are designated to the State Trails System to provide additional points of public access to scenic or recreation trails or to provide connections between such trails, including connections between points of interest on such trails.

### **SUBCHAPTER 5. DESIGNATION OF TRAILS TO THE STATE TRAILS SYSTEM**

#### **7:5D-5.1 Qualifications for designation**

- (a) To qualify for designation to the State Trails System, a trail must satisfy one of the following qualifications:
  1. The trail right-of-way is owned through fee simple title or held under a conservation restriction or scenic easement by the State and administered by the Department;
  2. The trail right-of-way is owned through fee simple title or held under a conservation restriction or scenic easement by a local unit or a charitable conservancy, and access to and use of the trail right-of-way is guaranteed through legal instrument dedicating the trail right-of-way for trail purposes duly filed with the appropriate county clerk; or

3. The trail right-of-way is owned by the Federal government or State agency other than the Department and there is a written cooperative agreement between the owner agency and the Department designating land or water areas for trail purposes.

#### **7:5D-5.2 Procedure and criteria for designation to the State Trails System**

- (a) Any Federal or State agency, local unit, private organization or person may submit to the Department a request for designation of a trail to the State Trails System in accordance with the criteria for eligibility set forth at (d)1 through 7 below. The trail designation request shall also include documentation prepared to support eligibility for designation in accordance with (e) below. The trail designation request shall be submitted to the Department at the following address: State Trails System, Office of Natural Lands Management, Department of Environmental Protection, PO Box 404, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0404.
- (b) The Division, with advice of the Council, shall evaluate the request for designation and the eligibility of each trail according to the criteria at N.J.A.C. 7:5D-5.1 and this section. If the Division determines that the trail meets the qualifications for designation and the criteria for eligibility, the Division shall prepare a recommendation for the Commissioner's review evaluating the proposed trail's suitability for designation and recommending that the Commissioner approve or disapprove the proposed trail designation.
- (c) The Commissioner shall review all trail designation recommendations submitted by the Division and shall take one of the following actions on each proposal:
  1. Propose the trail designation and designated uses of the trail as an amendment to N.J.A.C. 7:7D-8.1;
  2. Request that the Division reconsider its recommendations and resubmit the proposal to the Commissioner's review; or
  3. Reject the proposed trail designation.
- (d) A proposal to designate a trail to the System shall be based on the following eligibility criteria:
  1. Scenic Quality: The presence of high quality or rare natural features, vistas, historical or cultural features or other points of interest that can be sighted or visited along the trail;
  2. Accessibility: The availability of access points for vehicles, trailers or disabled trail users along or adjacent to the trail right-of-way. Water trail rights-of-way shall have public access at both ends of the trail and at areas where portage is required;
  3. Length: Trails shall be a minimum of five miles in length to be eligible for consideration as scenic trails, but this criterion may be satisfied by segments or components of a group of trails totaling five miles or more. Recreation or connecting trails are not subject to a length criterion;
  4. Multiple use: Trails which are managed in a safe and environmentally protective manner to

accommodate more than one type of trail use are preferred for designation to those which can support only a single use.

5. Development and Maintenance Costs: Trails which require little capital development or reconstruction of areas critical to the purpose of the trail are preferred to those which require extensive time and cost to develop and maintain;
6. Public Support: Public input and recommendations from counties, municipalities, private citizens' groups or other persons indicating endorsement of or opposition to future trail designation; and
7. Environmental Impact: Trail development will cause minimal erosion or destruction of plant, animal, historic or cultural resources unless no alternative routes are available.

(e) Eligibility for designation to the system shall be determined by the Department based on the submittal of the following documentation:

1. A written narrative description of the trail area and trail right-of-way, including a description of the length, surrounding land use, physical condition, and need for land acquisition and/or development for the proposed trail, and a description of public support of or opposition to the proposed trail;
2. A United States Geological survey 7.5 minute quadrangle map marked to show the location of the proposed trail;
3. A written evaluation of whether the proposed trail should be designated as a scenic trail, recreation trail or connecting trail as set forth at N.J.A.C. 7:5D-4;
4. A written statement of how the proposed trail meets the qualifications under 7:5D-5.1 and the criteria of eligibility under 7:5D-5.2(d).
5. A listing and justification of proposed uses for the trail upon designation; and
6. If the person proposing the trail designation is not the administering agency for the trail, a letter from the administering agency supporting the designation proposal.

### **7:5D-5.3 Repeal of trail designation**

- (a) If at any time after the designation of a trail to the System the Department determines that the trail is not meeting its designated uses and/or management objectives and that mitigation measures are not available to bring the trail into conformance with its designated uses and/or management objectives, the Department may propose to repeal the designation of the trail to the System.
- (b) The procedure for repealing the designation of a trail to the System is as follows:
  1. If the Division makes a preliminary determination that the designation of a trail to the System

should be repealed, it shall conduct a site evaluation of the trail to determine the extent of the trail deterioration, change of use, or unsuitability;

2. Upon completion of the site evaluation, the Division shall submit the site evaluation to the administering agency for a determination of whether mitigation measures are available to bring the trail into conformance with the designated uses and/or management objectives;
3. The Division, with the advice of the Council, shall review the administering agency's determination under (b)2 above, and, if appropriate, shall recommend repeal of the trail designation to the Commissioner;
4. The Commissioner shall review all trail designation repeal recommendations submitted by the Division and shall take one of the following actions on each proposal;
  - i. Propose the trail repeal as an amendment to N.J.A.C. 7:5D-8.1;
  - ii. Request that the Division reconsider its recommendation and resubmit the proposal for the Commissioner's review, if appropriate; or
  - iii. Reject the proposed repeal of the trail designation.

## **SUBCHAPTER 6. TRAILS MANAGEMENT**

### **7:5D-6.1 Trails management**

- (a) Except as provided under (g) below and under N.J.A.C. 7:5D-7.1(f), all uses of a trail right-of-way that are inconsistent with the uses specified by the Department upon designation of the trail to the System are prohibited without approval by the Department.
- (b) Upon designation of a trail to the System, the administering agency, in coordination with the Department and with the advice of the Council, shall prepare a management plan for the trail right-of-way.
- (c) Management objectives to be addressed through preparation of a trail management plan include:
  1. Management of scenic trails primarily to protect and enhance their natural and scenic qualities;
  2. Protection of the natural vegetation of trail rights-of-way. Clearing of vegetation shall be permitted for public safety, trail construction, creation of occasional vistas, construction or maintenance of trail use facilities or other natural resource management that does not adversely affect the trail right-of-way or its designated uses and/or management objectives;
  3. Development of multiple compatible trail uses which allow convenient exits and entrances. Special consideration shall be given to identifying trail segments and access points appropriate for the needs of disabled trail users and conducting planning to meet any applicable guidelines and/or requirements under the ADA;

4. Full consideration of and coordination with adjacent landowners and their operations in order to minimize potential adverse effects on these owners from trail use;
  5. Identification of pre-existing trail uses that are inconsistent with the nature of the trail and its designated uses and/or management objectives, and evaluation of techniques to mitigate their impact;
  6. Description of erosion control measures, if necessary, taking into account the designated uses of the trail and preservation of the natural environment; and
  7. Identification of parking or other ancillary facilities necessary to support the classification and uses of the trail.
- (d) The administering agency shall be responsible for the initial development and continued maintenance of a designated trail. The management techniques employed by the administering agency shall be compatible with the trail classification and the purposes for which the trail was designated. The administering agency may allow uses of the trail other than the designated uses only with the prior approval of the Department.
  - (e) In developing a trails management plan, the administering agency shall solicit the advice of the local unit(s) with jurisdiction over the area(s) through which the trail passes.
  - (f) The administering agency is encouraged to solicit advice on trail design and management, and assistance for routine trail maintenance, from volunteers and user groups.
  - (g) The administering agency shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible with the owner of the trail right-of-way in complying with the requirements of the ADA, as applicable.
  - (h) Emergency vehicles and authorized maintenance vehicles shall be permitted access to designated trails for emergency and management purposes.
  - (i) The Department shall provide administering agencies with standardized trail head signs for posting.
1. The administering agency shall place and maintain signs at trail entrances, exits, and other strategic points to indicate that a trail is a component of the System.
  - (j) The Department will inspect each designated trail at least every two years, with the cooperation and assistance of the administering agency. If the Department determines that the trail is not meeting one or more of its designated uses and/or management objectives, it may authorize the administering agency to undertake mitigation measures, including temporary prohibition of one or more trail uses. If the Department determines that mitigation measures are not available to bring the trail into conformance with its designated uses and/or management objectives, it may recommend repeal of the trail designation in accordance with the procedure at N.J.A.C. 7:5D-5.3.

## SUBCHAPTER 7. DEPARTMENT-FUNDED CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AFFECTING DESIGNATED TRAILS

### 7:5D-7.1 Review of Department-funded construction projects affecting designated trails

- (a) The Department shall assess all proposed construction projects partially or wholly funded by the Department that temporarily or permanently cross, directly border upon, or interrupt use of a designated trail right-of-way or its facilities to determine the project's potential impact on the trail, trail users, associated facilities and adjacent property owners.
- (b) It is the Department's policy to incorporate, through a memorandum of understanding if appropriate, an informal analysis of the impact of a proposed project on designated trails into its review of non-Department-funded construction projects under its other regulatory programs. The Department may require permittees to take measures to mitigate the impact of proposed projects on designated trails if such measures are consistent with the statutory and regulatory authority governing the permit program.
- (c) The Department's review under (a) or (b) above shall assess the following:
  1. The location and nature of the proposed project, including the length of time the project is expected to be under construction;
  2. The potential impacts of the proposed project on the trail, including, but not limited to, soil erosion, sediment deposition, degradation of water quality, flooding, safety and health hazards, destruction or degradation of natural, historic or cultural resources, or disruption of scenic values; and
  3. Proposed or potential methods for mitigating or remediating the proposed project's impacts on the trail.
- (d) The Division, with the advice of the Council, shall review a proposed Department-funded construction project within 90 days of receipt of the project plans from the Department's funding program and shall provide a recommendation on the proposed project to the Commissioner.
- (e) The Commissioner shall review the recommendation of the Division made under (d) above and shall take one of the following actions on the recommendation:
  1. If the Commissioner determines that the proposed Department-funded construction project will temporarily interfere with the trail right-of-way, the Commissioner may require, as a condition of Department funding, mitigation measures to maintain or relocate the trail and its facilities in a manner consistent with the designated classification of the trail during the period of construction or permanently thereafter; or
  2. If the Commissioner determines that the proposed Department-funded construction project will permanently interfere with the trail right-of-way or its uses, thereby rendering the trail unsuitable for its designated purposes, and that no satisfactory remediation or mitigation is possible, the Commissioner may disapprove use of the trail for the proposed project. Remediation for



permanent interference with the trail right-of-way may include relocation of the trail right-of-way in a manner consistent with N.J.A.C. 7:5D-5.1 and 5.2.

- (f) Emergency measures to protect public health, safety and welfare may be undertaken in the trail right-of-way without prior review by the Department. However, persons or organizations undertaking such measures must notify the Division in writing within 24 hours of commencing such measures.

## **SUBCHAPTER 8. STATE TRAILS SYSTEM**

### **7:5D-8.1 State Trails System**

(a) The following trails are designated as components of the State Trails System:

1. Appalachian Trail:

- i. Location: Extending approximately 70 miles from the Delaware Water Gap to the New York-New Jersey border in Abram S. Hewitt State Forest.
- ii. Administering Agency: Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry; United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, for that part in Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.
- iii. Permitted Trail Uses: Hiking; sections suitable for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing when snow-covered.
- iv. Trail Class: Scenic.
- v. Significance: The Appalachian Trail is a National Scenic Trail, following the ridges and valleys of the Appalachian Mountain System from Maine to Georgia. The New Jersey section passes through a variety of upland and lowland landscapes in Warren, Sussex and Passaic counties. Numerous side trails connect with the Appalachian Trail.

2. Batona Trail:

- i. Location: Extending approximately 49 miles in Brendan T. Byrne, New Lisbon, to Bass River State Forest, New Gretna, Burlington County.
- ii. Administering Agency: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry.
- iii. Permitted Trail Uses: Hiking; sections suitable for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing when snow-covered.
- iv. Trail Class: Scenic.
- v. Significance: The Batona Trail passes through a variety of Pine Barrens upland and lowland

landscapes, connecting Lebanon, Wharton and Bass River State forests.

3. Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park:

- i. Location: Extending approximately 70 miles from New Brunswick to Lawrence and from Trenton to Frenchtown, passing through Mercer, Hunterdon, Somerset and Middlesex counties.
- ii. Administering Agency: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry.
- iii. Permitted Trail Uses: Hiking, bicycling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing throughout the entire length; horseback riding on the Main Canal section. Canoeing and kayaking are permitted in the canal.
- iv. Trail Class: Recreation.
- v. Significance: Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park includes a canal and towpath of the Delaware and Raritan Canal, and the former right-of-way of the Bel-Del Railroad. The park is listed as a National Recreation Trail. It is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has numerous historic structures and buildings associated with it.

4. Paulinskill Valley Trail:

- i. Location: Lands owned by the Department extending approximately 27 miles from Knowlton to Sparta Junction.
- ii. Administering Agency: Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry.
- iii. Permitted Trail Uses: Hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, bicycling, dog-sledding, and horseback riding and carriage driving.
- iv. Trail Class: Recreation.
- v. Significance: The trail is designed to provide a variety of trail activities. It passes through a variety of rural and wooded landscapes in Sussex and Warren counties, and contains significant cultural features as an abandoned right-of-way of the former New York Susquehanna and Western Railroad. It intersects the Sussex Branch Trail and is managed by Kittatinny Valley State Park.

5. Sussex Branch Trail:

- i. Location: Lands owned by the Department extending 20 miles from Netcong to Branchville, in Morris and Sussex counties.
- ii. Administering Agency: Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry.

- iii. Permitted Trail Uses: Hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and bicycling for its entire length; dog-sledding, horseback riding, and carriage driving from Andover to Branchville.
  - iv. Trail Class: Recreation.
  - v. Significance: The Sussex Branch Trail passes through a variety of landscapes in Sussex and Morris counties and contains significant natural features. It was an abandoned right-of-way of the former Erie Lackawanna Railroad and is now managed by Kittatinny Valley and Hopatcong State parks. The Sussex Branch Trail is designed to provide a variety of trail activities and access to several other outdoor recreational activities at Kittatinny Valley State Park and Allamuchy Mountain State Park.
6. Belleplain State Forest Trail System:
- i. Location: Upper and Dennis townships, Cape May County and Maurice River Township, Cumberland County.
  - ii. Administering Agency: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry.
  - iii. Permitted Trail Uses: Hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and motorized use of registered vehicles on designated trails.
  - iv. Trail Class: Recreation.
  - v. Significance: Belleplain State Forest offers a variety of trail opportunities on over 15,600 acres of predominantly Pine Barrens forest, including a trail for the visually impaired.
7. Cedar Creek:
- i. Location: Ocean County, from Dover Forge, in Double Trouble State Park to Route 9.
  - ii. Permitted Trail Uses: Canoeing and kayaking.
  - iii. Trail Class: Recreation.
  - iv. Significance: Cedar Creek provides an appreciation of ecosystems of the Pinelands, in a slow winding course. The river passes through Double Trouble State Park and the village of Double Trouble, a National Historic District.
8. Wells Mills County Park Trails System:
- i. Location: Ocean Township, Ocean County.
  - ii. Administering Agency: Ocean County Parks and Recreation Department.

iii. Permitted Trail Uses: Hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and bicycling on designated trails.

iv. Trail Class: Recreation.

v. Significance: The park includes Pine Barrens upland oak-pine forests and lowland habitats, including Atlantic white cedar swamps. The park also includes a trail for the visually impaired, nature center, picnic area, and canoe rental for fishing and canoeing on Wells Mills Lake.

9. Wharton Water Trails:

i. Location: Burlington and Atlantic counties, within Wharton State Forest.

ii. Administering agency: All portions of adjacent land to the rivers are within Wharton State Forest, administered by the Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry.

iii. Permitted Trail Uses: Canoeing and kayaking.

iv. Trail Class: Recreation.

v. Significance: Wharton Water Trails form a network of pristine Pine Barrens water trails all converging into the Mullica River. The Lower Atsion, Batsto, Oswego and Wading rivers total 52 miles of slow-moving waterways that are available for canoeing and kayaking. The Lower Atsion is New Jersey's only designated Wild and Scenic River.

#### **7:5D-8.2 Public Information**

Interested persons may obtain information on the State Trails System by contacting:

Office of Natural Lands Management  
Division of Parks and Forestry  
Department of Environmental Protection  
PO Box 404  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0404  
(609) 984-1339

[NATLANDS@dep.state.nj.us](mailto:NATLANDS@dep.state.nj.us)